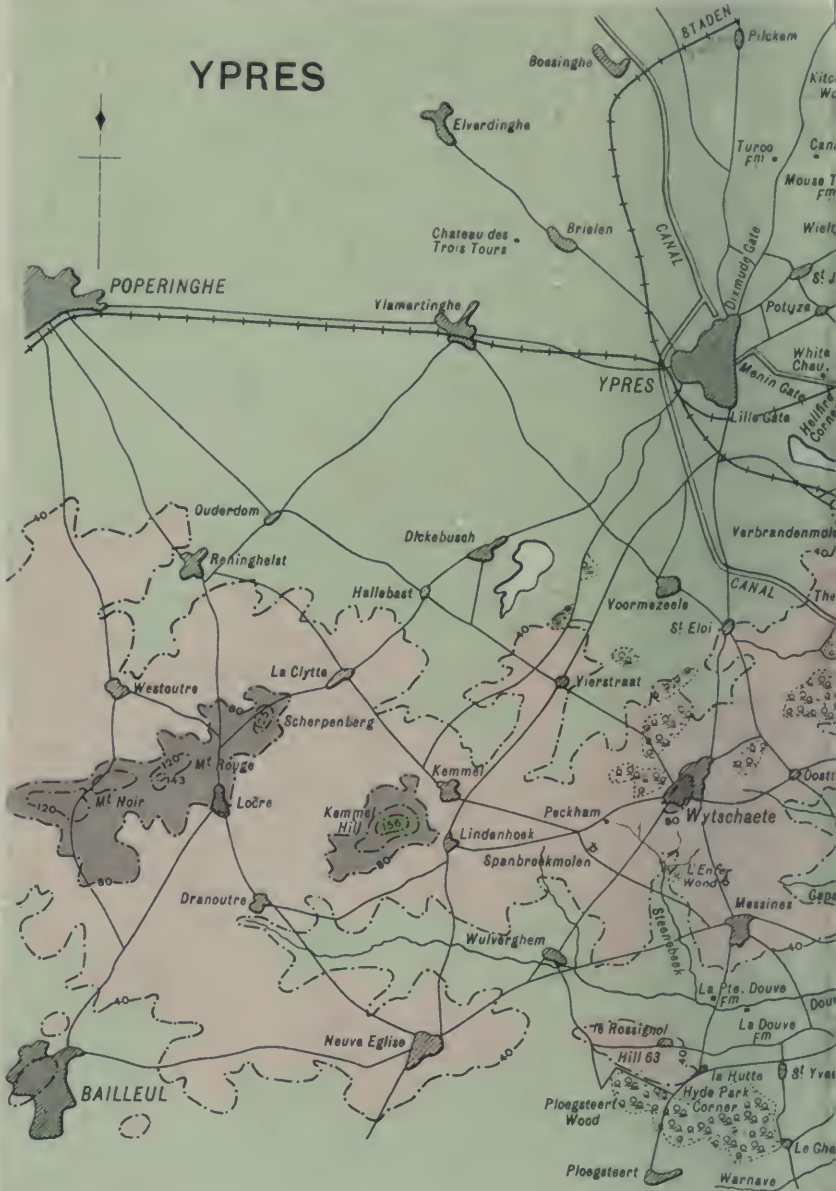
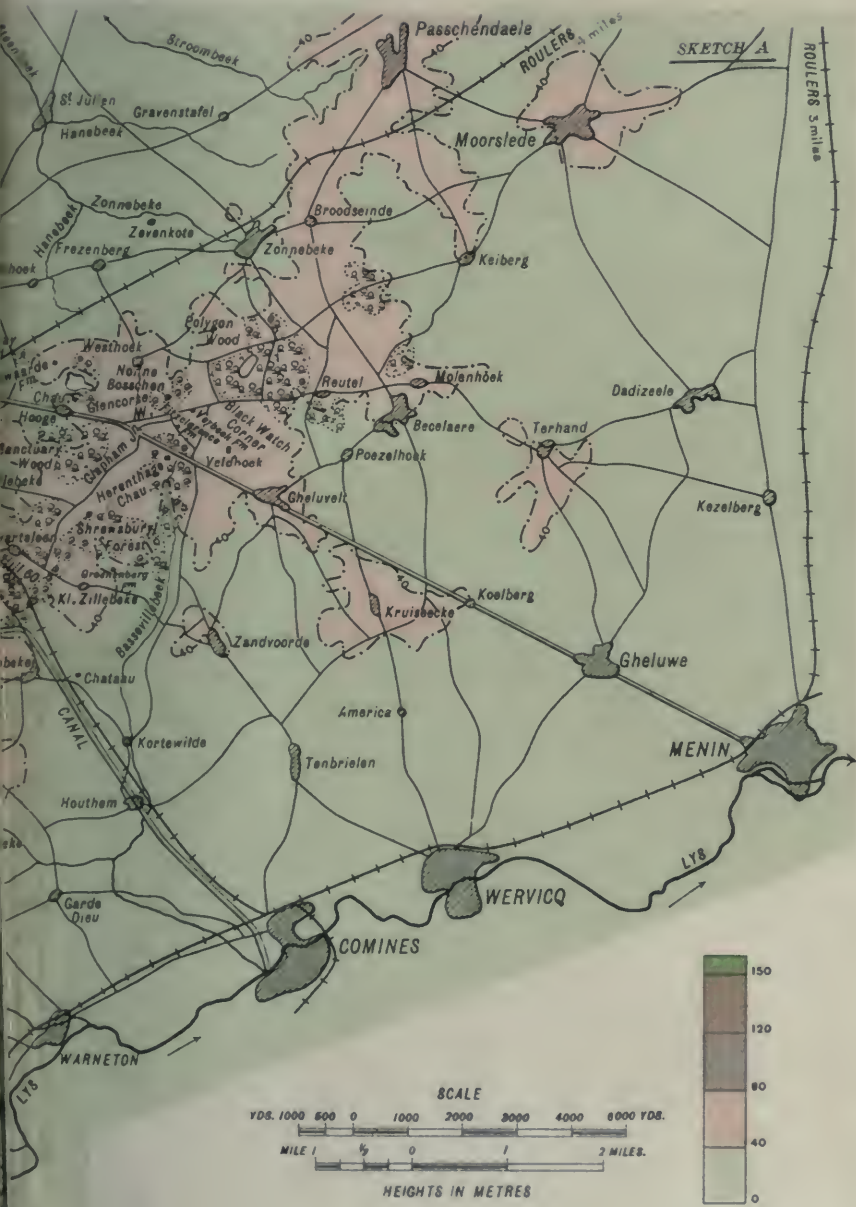




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# YPRES





Ordnance Survey, 1923.



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HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR  
MILITARY OPERATIONS



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HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR  
BASED ON OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

BY DIRECTION OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE  
COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

MILITARY OPERATIONS

FRANCE AND BELGIUM, 1914

ANTWERP, LA BASSÉE, ARMENTIÈRES, MESSINES, AND YPRES  
OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1914

COMPILED BY

BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. E. EDMONDS

C.B., C.M.G., R.E. (Retired), p.s.c.

MAPS AND SKETCHES COMPILED BY

MAJOR A. F. BECKE

R.A. (Retired), Hon. M.A. (Oxon.)

(194989  
25.3.25-

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1925



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## P R E F A C E

THIS volume completes the narrative, begun in Volume I., of the operations of the British Army in the Western theatre of war in the year 1914 down to the close of the Battles of Ypres. Beginning with an introductory chapter on the preparations initiated in the Homeland and the Empire for the continuation of the war, and a brief notice of the operations against the German Colonies, it describes the loss of Antwerp and the great battles in Flanders:—La Bassée, Armentières, Messines and Ypres, which raged without a break from the 10th October to the 22nd November 1914. During this period there was little change in the character of the fighting between the two equally matched antagonists: German superiority in numbers and metal was balanced by the high military qualities of the Allies. An account of such combats is bound to be more or less monotonous, but those who read the story should endeavour to picture to themselves what those weeks of uninterrupted struggle meant to the commanders in the field and the thin line of troops which stood between the enemy and the Channel ports.

Had the scale on which Volume I. was written been continued, the narrative of battles so long drawn out would have extended into several volumes, and much beyond the compass now authorized for the series.<sup>1</sup> There were seven days on which very critical fighting took place in August and September as compared with twenty days in October and November 1914, and the forces concerned in the latter period were larger and spread over a wider front. It has therefore been necessary to exercise severe compression,

<sup>1</sup> Approval has been given for approximately ten volumes on the operations on the Western Front, viz. : for 1914, two ; for 1915, one ; for 1916, two ; for 1917, two ; for 1918, three. In view of the special interest attaching to 1918, the volumes on that year have been taken in hand to follow those on 1914, without interrupting work on the intermediate period. Two volumes on the campaign in Mesopotamia have been published ; volumes on Gallipoli, and Egypt and Palestine are in preparation.



and to put some information very briefly in parentheses and in footnotes. The story, has, in fact, been cut down from drafts considerably longer: the first draft for the Introductory Chapter was, in itself, more than the contents of a volume. In every case, each day had to be worked out at full length before the condensed version could be written; but only the two most critical days, the 31st October and the 11th November, have been retained in anything like their original detail.

The narrative is based on the British official records. As in the case of Volume I., these have been supplemented by private diaries and papers which have been kindly lent; by regimental narratives; by interviews with officers who took part; and particularly by the additions and corrections furnished by a very large number of officers of all ranks who have been kind enough to read the draft of the chapters in typescript or in proof. To these friends I offer my sincere thanks: without their assistance it would have been quite impossible to produce so complete and intelligible a story. Nevertheless, it has not been possible to consult everyone, and errors may have crept in and omissions may have been made. I therefore repeat the request, made in Volume I., that any further information available, or any corrections thought desirable, should be sent to the Secretary of the Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defence, 2 Whitehall Gardens, London, S.W.1.<sup>1</sup>

It has been particularly difficult to determine the fighting strength of every unit on any particular day of a battle, as some battalion diaries give the numbers for one day, some for another, and the totals are only summed up occasionally by brigades and divisions. Regimental and higher staffs were naturally more concerned with fighting than statistics. Of the actual strength of the enemy units little is known; the comparisons of the relative strengths of the belligerents offered in the text from time to time can, as a rule, only be made by divisions. But, as the Germans continued to put fresh divisions into the fight until the 11th November 1914, whilst the same seven British divisions were engaged without relief, the enemy formations undoubtedly had a greater average strength than the British.

<sup>1</sup> A list of "Addenda and Corrigenda" to Volume I. is issued with the present volume. I tender my best thanks to the readers who furnished them.

The French and British troops were so intermixed and so dependent on each other, that it has been impossible to avoid entering into some detail of the operations of our Allies ; but the account has been made as short as possible. The British records contain a very large collection of French " directives ", operation orders, situation maps and other papers for the period. There are also a very excellent narrative of the IX. Corps, which fought on the British left, drawn up by its commander, General Dubois ; a paper by General d'Urbal, commanding the Eighth Army, which comprised nearly all the French forces co-operating with the British ; a volume on the operations of General de Mitry's cavalry corps ; and a general narrative of the Battles of Ypres by General Palat. It has therefore been unnecessary, although the French official history has not yet been published, to ask the Historical Section in Paris to clear up more than a few points : such as the orders of battle ; the detailed operations of units and formations most closely concerned with the British ; and the exact front on certain days of some of the higher formations. This information has in every case been most kindly provided.

For the Belgian operations the Historical Section of the Belgian General Staff furnished their official narrative, and Colonel Merzbach, the head of the Section, was good enough to read the typescript of the Antwerp chapters and send some important corrections.

The battles would be incomprehensible without reference to the German plans and movements. The information with regard to them has been incorporated in the main narrative, in footnotes, or placed in " Notes " at the end of the chapters, as seemed from its nature and importance to be most suitable. For the German story there is ample material, as will be seen from the " List of Books ". There is not only the official monograph, " Die Schlachten an der Yser und bei Ypern " <sup>1</sup> and an official account of the operations of the Bavarian forces in the war, but there are very numerous regimental histories. As in the case of Volume I., General Freiherr Mertz von Quirheim, the Director of the German *Reichsarchiv*, Berlin, which has custody of the war records, has been good enough to send me statistics and replies to certain questions on points which it was desired to clear up.

A book on military history, unfortunately both for

<sup>1</sup> Translated under the title of " Ypres, 1914 " (Constable, 5s.).

writers and readers, is useless without maps. As for Volume I., two sets have been prepared. One, distinguished by the word "Sketches", is bound in the volume, the other is issued separately. It is hoped that the many sketches now provided will make the general reader quite independent of the map volume.<sup>1</sup>

I have received very great assistance in the compilation of this volume from the staff of the Historical Section (Military Branch): from Captain G. C. Wynne and Mr. E. A. Dixon in the collection of material; from Major F. W. Tomlinson and Captain W. Miles in revision and preparation for the press. The independent compilation of the maps by Major A. F. Becke has been a valuable check on the narrative. In the revision of the text I have again received invaluable assistance from Mr. C. T. Atkinson, M.A., of Exeter College, formerly in charge of the Branch, whose knowledge of the records is unique; and much careful criticism from my brother-in-law, Mr. W. B. Wood, M.A.

The volume, in order to get it to the Army by the 31st October, was compiled at high speed, at greater speed perhaps than is desirable in the writing of history. Unfortunately its publication has been delayed owing to the dislocation of work for many weeks caused by the removal of the Branch and its twenty-five thousand boxes of records and ninety thousand maps from 2 Cavendish Square to Audit House, Victoria Embankment, E.C.4; whilst, although the typescript was complete and ready for the press on 27th March, the printers did not receive it until 8th August, owing to protracted negotiations regarding a reduction in the price of the volume.

<sup>1</sup> Seven additional "Sketches" for Volume I., so as to make it really independent of the "Maps", have also been prepared, and can be obtained from Messrs. Macmillan & Company, price 9d.

J. E. E.

10th October 1924.

## NOTES

THE location of troops and places is given from right to left of the front of the Allied Forces, unless otherwise stated. Thus, even in retreat, they are described from east to west. In translations from the German they are left as in the original, but otherwise enemy troops also are enumerated in relation to the British front.

To save space and bring the nomenclature in line with "Division", "Infantry Brigade" has in the text been abbreviated to "Brigade", as distinguished from Cavalry Brigade and Artillery Brigade.

The convention observed in the British Expeditionary Force is followed as regards the distinguishing numbers of Armies, Corps, Divisions, etc., of the British and Allied Armies, *e.g.* they are written in full for Armies, but in Roman figures for Corps, and in Arabic for smaller formations and units, except Artillery Brigades, which are Roman; thus: Fourth Army, IV. Corps, 4th Cavalry Division, 4th Division, 4th Cavalry Brigade, 4th Brigade, IV. Brigade R.F.A.

German formations and units, to distinguish them clearly from the Allies, are printed in italic characters, thus: *First Army, I. Corps, 1st Division.*

The usual Army abbreviations of regimental names have been used in the narrative: for example, "2/R. West Kent" or "West Kents" for 2nd Battalion The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment); "the Somerset" or "Somerset L.I." for The Somerset Light Infantry; K.O.Y.L.I. for the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; K.R.R.C. for the King's Royal Rifle Corps. To avoid constant repetition, the "Royal" in regimental titles is sometimes omitted: for instance, the Royal Warwickshire are occasionally called "the Warwickshire".



Abbreviations employed occasionally are :—

B.E.F. for British Expeditionary Force ;

G.H.Q. for British General Headquarters ;

G.Q.G. for French Grand Quartier Général (usually spoken “ Grand Q.G.”) ;

O.H.L. for German *Oberste Heeresleitung* (German Supreme Command). *N.B.*—“ G.H.Q.” in German means *Grosses Haupt-Quartier*, that is the Kaiser’s Headquarters, political, military and naval, as distinguished from O.H.L.

Officers are described by the rank which they held at the period under consideration.

The German practice, rarely followed in English, of writing surnames, when no rank or title is prefixed, has been adopted, *e.g.* “ Kluck ” and not “ von Kluck ”.

Time in German narratives and orders, which in the period dealt with was one hour earlier than British, has been corrected to our standard, unless it has specifically stated against it, “ German time ”.



## MAPS AND SKETCHES

LAYERED maps of the ground near Ypres and La Bassée are provided in the end papers Sketches A and B. It was assumed in compiling the text that the ordinary reader would refer to these for the form of the ground, and that the military student would work with the general Maps 1 and 2 on the table, and the situation maps noted marginally laid on top of them.

The situation maps give the position of the troops at the close of the day whose date they bear. For some days, therefore, in order to follow the operations, it will be found necessary to use the map of the previous day for the first movements.

Endeavour has been made to mark on the maps every place mentioned in the text; but to avoid overcrowding some small localities are omitted and their positions are described in the text, in brackets, with reference to marked and well-known places. This practice is also followed sometimes when a place beyond the margin of the map in use is mentioned.

The spelling of the place names has given considerable trouble, as this varies on different authoritative maps. Thus Kruisecke is given on the Belgian 1/20,000 as Kruseik, on the 1/40,000 and on the British 1/250,000 as Kruiseik. Similarly, Mangelare, Mangelaere and Mangellaere, and Schaap Baillie, Schaep Baillie, Schaap Balie are found. The spelling recently approved by the Royal Geographical Society contains undoubtedly obsolete forms. In the present volume—but not on Maps 1 and 2, which are extracts of the maps prepared during the War—the spelling used in the latest available edition of the maps of the Belgian Institut Cartographique Militaire has been followed for Belgium, and in the French 1/80,000 for France.



## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME II

(Kindly pointed out by various correspondents.)

Page 14, line 19. For "the work of these" substitute: "although the orders for the annual army requirements had been distributed between both sources, the work of the private firms".

Page 14, lines 5-4 from bottom. After "135 rifles a week" add footnote:  
"Owing to the expected early introduction of a new rifle, the orders were exceptionally small. At the time the B.S.A. Company were also making 569 rifles a week for India."

Page 15, line 22. After "in detail." add footnote:  
"Only one officer or official went on service from the Master-General of the Ordnance's Department during the first year of the war."

Page 16, penultimate line of footnote 1. Delete "only".

Page 66, margin. For "1 Oct." read "11 Oct."

Page 78, 4 lines from bottom. For "south-east" read "south-west".

Page 81, lines 21-2. For "rallying on . . . the divisional reserve," substitute: "and there rallied, being joined shortly after by two companies of the Devons, the divisional reserve,".

Page 97, line 7. After "Outtersteene" add footnote:  
"Spelt Oultersteene on Map 1".  
line 8. For "18th" read "17th" and for "10th" read "12th".

Page 113, lines 13-15. For the words "for the Leinsters . . . to master the Mont de Prêmesques", substitute: "until the Leinsters of the 17th Brigade captured the village of Prêmesques and the Mont de Prêmesques".

Page 122, line 32 (end of fourth paragraph). Add footnote:  
"The 'Festschrift zum zehnjährigen Gründungstage, 1st September 1914-1924', of the *201st Reserve Infantry Regiment* of the German *XXII. Reserve Corps*, one of the new corps that fought at Ypres 1914, states (page 11) that when ready to start for the theatre of war in October 1914: 'our men were told the fall of Antwerp was imminent; 'on it depended the date of our departure for the front'. Antwerp capitulated on 10th October: the *201st Reserve Regiment* left its camp to entrain on the night of the 11th October."



## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME II (1914 \* \*)

Additional to those issued with Vols. III. and IV.

Page 101, line 11. For "south-westerly" read "south-easterly".

Page 109, line 2 from bottom. After "Menin" add footnote :

"The order for the isolated advance of the IV. Corps seems to have been due to a request on the 16th October from General Foch to Sir John French 'to advance Rawlinson's 'corps from Ypres in the direction of Roulers, in order to 'divert the German attack from the Belgian Army.' (Memoirs of Maréchal Foch, English edition, p. 153.)"

Page 119, footnote 1. For "XXVIII." read "XXVII."

Page 128. Add to footnote 3 : "According to the German official account, Volume V. (published 1929), Falkenhayn's plan throughout the 'Race to the Sea' was the envelopment of the Allied outer flank combined with a break-through further south (e.g. at Roye and then at Arras), so as to surround and capture the troops between the two attacks. When the Belgians and British reached the neighbourhood of Ypres, he planned, as stated in the text, to pierce their front and roll up the Allied line ; but this operation, similarly, was to be combined with a break-through at La Bassée. When the attempts to carry this out failed, Falkenhayn gradually reduced the scope of his manoeuvre, until, in order to finish off the operation of the year with some sort of success, his objective became merely the town of Ypres."

Page 251, lines 4-11. For "eastwards to Zandvoorde . . . no attack followed." substitute : "to the west shoulder of the reverse slope of Zandvoorde ridge. The leading squadron then crossed the ridge, opened out, and, in the fading light, cantered towards the enemy trenches ; but, receiving heavy though erratic fire, turned and rode at a gallop for some hundreds of yards parallel to and two hundred yards from the Germans and then back into the British lines, with hardly a casualty. The other two squadrons did not follow the leading one, but were moved to the right behind the ridge to the western outskirts of Zandvoorde. Here they dismounted and filled a gap in the line of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, and by order fired 50 rounds per man."

Page 434, line 20. After "front line." add "All available ammunition wagons had been sent up by Br.-General E. M. Perceval, G.O.C. 2nd Division artillery."

Page 452, line 6 from bottom. For "Verey" read "Very".

Page 474. In *14th Brigade under 5th Division*. For "2 Suffolk R." read "1 Devon. R. (replaced in 8th Bde. 3rd Div. by 1/Gordons 1st Oct. 1914)."

Page 536. Index. For "Perceval, Licut.-Col. E. M." read "Perceval, Br.-Gen. E. M."





## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOL. II 6

- Page 141, line 22. Before "Prêmesques" insert: "Mont de Prêmesques". Penultimate and last line, and first line and a half on page 142. Delete "This stopped . . . defensive flank." and substitute:
- "The Leinsters formed a defensive flank, and this and a counter-attack made by the first company of the East Yorkshire and a platoon each from the Leinsters and North Staffordshire stopped enemy progress for some time, although superior numbers eventually drove these troops back and the Mont de Prêmesques was lost about 4.30 P.M."
- Page 157, line 14. For "Pilckem" read "Steenstraat (on the canal, 2½ miles north-west of Pilckem)".
- Page 160, lines 9 and 8 from bottom. Delete: "Poelcappelle—" and substitute a colon.
- Page 164, line 7. After "I. Corps", add: "where most of the casualties occurred".
- Page 186, line 3 from bottom. After "an attack" add: "led by mounted officers".
- Page 187, footnote, line 5. After the word "company" insert: "under the instructions of Lieut.-Colonel A. L. Schreiber, C.R.E. of the 1st Division".
- footnote, line 7. After the words "1/Gloucestershire" insert: "(under Major R. E. Rising)".
- Page 215, penultimate and ante-penultimate lines.
- (1) Exchange the positions of 20th and 21st Companies, Sappers and Miners.
- (2) After "47th Sikhs" add footnote:
- "These two companies came up about dawn on the 28th to fill a gap of several hundred yards between the two Sappers and Miners companies."
- Page 216. Add to footnote 2: "According to Schwarte, Vol. iv., pp. 496-7; Hanslian und Bergendorff, 'Der chemische Krieg', pp. 9-10; Bauer, 'Der grosse Krieg in Feld und Heimat', p. 67; and others, the first use of gas shell took place at Neuve Chapelle on the 27th October 1914. Three thousand 10·5 cm. shrapnel shell containing an eye and nose irritant, a 'Dianisidin' salt, in addition to the bullets and burster, were tried as an experiment. They had little effect, indeed were not noticed by the British, as the gas was not sufficiently intensive. A lachrymatory shell was tried at Lodz (Poland) in January 1915, and at Nieupoit in March 1915."
- Page 267, lines 4-6. For "Being impressed . . . independently." substitute: "Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Lovett acting on the same information, had however sent forward D Company at once under Major G. F. Gardner to stop the Germans, telling him that he would send other companies as soon as he could get them on the move."
- lines 7-8. For "one company" read "D Company".
- lines 17-19. For "in trouble . . . but," substitute: "lining a hedge—aided by survivors of the Black Watch, Coldstream and 2/Border Regiment—about 250 yards behind its original position. To this it had retired by Major Gardner's order, when after an hour's stout defence he found that both flanks of his detachment had been turned. Here the two companies, joined later by men of the 20th Brigade, held on, and".



Page 273, line 15. After "lost" add the word "altogether".

Page 294, line 27. After "the Sussex" add a footnote :  
 "Lieut.-Colonel H. T. Crispin, commanding, was killed  
 about 10 A.M."

Page 298, 3rd line of footnote 1. For "between the Irish Guards and the  
 two companies of the Oxfordshire." read "between the  
 Oxfordshire and the Northamptonshire."

Page 305, line 9 from bottom. After the word "bayoneted" add footnote :  
 "Sir J. French decided on the 28th September 1914 that  
 bayonets should be issued to the cavalry."

Page 315, line 17. For "a company" read "D Company".

Page 315, lines 22-25. For "and when surrounded . . . remained open,"  
 substitute : "and it found the gap it was intended to fill  
 increased in width to over a thousand yards."

Page 318, line 1. After "to die." add the sentence : "To the captured  
 were soon added the 13 survivors of D Company of the  
 1/Gloucestershire; for on arrival in the Welch Regiment's  
 old trenches soon after the Queen's had been overwhelmed,  
 the company had shared the same fate."

Page 318, line 12. After "were retiring" add footnote :  
 "According to British prisoners these guns greatly con-  
 tributed to stopping the Germans, who were caught in mass  
 with shrapnel on and near the Menin road."

Page 346, lines 7 and 6 from bottom. Exchange the positions of "2/Royal  
 Sussex" and "1/Northamptonshire", and *make the same  
 correction on Map 28.*

Page 399, line 29. For "Lieut.-Colonel E. H. Montrésor" read "Captain  
 E. F. Villiers, commanding".

Page 434, footnote 1, line 1. For "*4th Guard Division*" read "*4th Guard  
 Brigade*".

Page 436, line 7. Add footnote :

"The regimental history of the *3rd Foot Guard Regiment*,  
 Part I., pp. 57-61, in a section headed 'Storming of the  
 British position at Polygon Wood', contains very little  
 information, two and a half pages of it being taken up with  
 the personal reminiscences of a Reserve lieutenant. It is  
 stated that 'the first positions, in which Cameron [*sic*]  
 'Highlanders were found, were easily overrun. Strong  
 'enfilade machine-gun fire hindered further progress, so that  
 'the 4th and 5th Companies had to reinforce. In the  
 'afternoon the 6th Company was put in to help the sister  
 'regiment on the right, and it succeeded in carrying the  
 'attack forward nearly to the edge of Polygon Wood. In  
 'the evening a brigade order arrived directing that the position  
 'reached should be held'. The losses of only the *I. Battalion*  
 are given : as 6 officers and 112 other ranks killed and 'great  
 'was the number of the wounded. The 3rd Company alone  
 'had 49 dead out of a fighting strength of 19 n.c.o.'s and  
 '147 men'."





Page 437, lines 16-18. For "but . . . carry out." substitute : "which place, by making a slight detour to avoid artillery fire, they reached without a casualty."

Page 441, lines 12-13. For "with care to avoid losses from the incessant artillery fire" substitute : "straight on and quickly, without regard for artillery fire".

Page 452, line 2. Add footnote :  
 "He was killed 21st March, 1918, as a lieut.-colonel, leading his battalion, the 2/4th Royal Berkshire, mounted, in a counter-attack."

Page 477. After Order of Battle of the Cavalry Corps add :

ROYAL NAVAL DIVISION

G.O.C. . . . .	Major-General A. Paris.
G.S.O.1. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel A. H. Ollivant.
C.R.E. . . . .	Major W. L. de M. Carey.

*Royal Marine Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Br.-General C. N. Trotman.
	Chatham Battalion R.M.L.I.
	Portsmouth " "
	Plymouth " "
	Deal " "

*1st Royal Naval Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Commodore W. Henderson, R.N.
	1st (Drake) Battalion.
	2nd (Hawke) " "
	3rd (Benbow) " "
	4th (Collingwood) Battalion.

*2nd Royal Naval Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Commodore O. Backhouse, R.N.
	5th (Nelson) Battalion.
	6th (Howe) " "
	7th (Hood) " "
	8th (Anson) " "

Page 487. At end of Appendix 3 add :

IV. Corps Signal Co. (formed from Scottish Command Signal Coys. R.E.) . . . . .	10th Oct. 1914.
CC Airline Section (formed from Scottish Command Signal Coys. R.E.) . . . . .	"
M & P Cable Sections (formed from Western A.T. Signal Companies). . . . .	"



## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO "1914" Vol. II

(Kindly pointed out by various correspondents)

- Page 314, line 5 from bottom to first line on page 315. For "By 9.30 A.M. . . . to the support line." substitute: "By 9.30 A.M. the right company of the Welch had been practically annihilated; and it seemed impossible to reinforce it, whilst there was no shelter for the weak reserve company situated, with battalion headquarters, in the hollow part of the Menin road behind the right. Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Morland therefore judged it advisable to withdraw his reserve and his headquarters back into the village, leaving the two other companies on the flank of the South Wales Borderers."
- Page 318, line 9 from bottom. After "withdrawing from Gheluvelt." add: ", who were rallied by Lieut. E. Wilkinson, the Quartermaster of the Loyals (killed later in the day), with the drivers and escort of the 1st Line Transport carrying the day's rations which he was bringing up."
- Page 342, lines 24-5. For "This information . . . as follows:—" substitute "Sir John French asked that this might be put in writing, and when this had been done, he scribbled a note on it, timed 3.35 P.M., which, with Foch's memorandum of the French troops which would be sent, was carried by Lieut.-Colonel B. Fitzgerald to General Haig. The note ran:—"
- Page 349. Add to footnote 2: "In the 'Mémoires du Maréchal Joffre', i. p. 479, but not in Poincaré, it is stated that Lord Kitchener made 'the proposal to replace Field-Marshal French at the 'head of the British Army by General Sir Ian Hamilton'. To this Joffre was strongly opposed and the idea was dropped. General Huguet, in his 'L'Intervention militaire britannique', p. 176, makes the same statement. There is no mention of the proposal in any British record."
- Page 408, lines 14-20. For "The Germans were pushed back . . . front of the Scots Guards." substitute: ", and the Germans were pushed back to the far edge of the woods. About 4 P.M. Br.-General FitzClarence sent a company of the Black Watch under Captain V. M. Fortune, who had made a preliminary reconnaissance for him, to assist in the recovery of the whole of the lost ground. But meantime the Loyals, under the two surviving officers, Captain A. L. Prince, who was killed, and Lieut. J. G. W. Hyndson, had retaken their trenches. A portion of the company of the Black Watch was retained to assist the Loyals in holding the re-captured line."



## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

Page 439, line 20. For "1st Brigade" read "6th Brigade".

Page 487. Appendix 3. An addendum giving the names of 4 Signal and Cable Sections has already been issued. To these should be added :

"FF. Motor Airline Section (formed from Southern Command Signal Coys. R.E.) . . . 10th Oct. 1914".

In the above mentioned addendum, "Western A.T. Signal Companies" should read "Western Command Signal Companies". Actually, all these units bore the title of "Command Signal Coys", until September 1914, when they became "A.T. [Army Troops] Signal Coys".





## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME II (1914 \* \*)

Additional to those issued with Vols. III. and IV.

Page 101, line 11. For "south-westerly" read "south-easterly".

Page 109, line 2 from bottom. After "Menin" add footnote :  
"The order for the isolated advance of the IV. Corps seems to have been due to a request on the 16th October from General Foch to Sir John French 'to advance Rawlinson's 'corps from Ypres in the direction of Roulers, in order to 'divert the German attack from the Belgian Army.' (Memoirs of Maréchal Foch, English edition, p. 153.)"

Page 119, footnote 1. For "XXVIII." read "XXVII."

Page 128. Add to footnote 3 : "According to the German official account, Volume V. (published 1929), Falkenhayn's plan throughout the 'Race to the Sea' was the envelopment of the Allied outer flank combined with a break-through further south (e.g. at Roye and then at Arras), so as to surround and capture the troops between the two attacks. When the Belgians and British reached the neighbourhood of Ypres, he planned, as stated in the text, to pierce their front and roll up the Allied line ; but this operation, similarly, was to be combined with a break-through at La Bassée. When the attempts to carry this out failed, Falkenhayn gradually reduced the scope of his manœuvre, until, in order to finish off the operation of the year with some sort of success, his objective became merely the town of Ypres."

Page 251, lines 4-11. For "eastwards to Zandvoorde . . . no attack followed." substitute : "to the west shoulder of the reverse slope of Zandvoorde ridge. The leading squadron then crossed the ridge, opened out, and, in the fading light, cantered towards the enemy trenches ; but, receiving heavy though erratic fire, turned and rode at a gallop for some hundreds of yards parallel to and two hundred yards from the Germans and then back into the British lines, with hardly a casualty. The other two squadrons did not follow the leading one, but were moved to the right behind the ridge to the western outskirts of Zandvoorde. Here they dismounted and filled a gap in the line of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, and by order fired 50 rounds per man."

Page 434, line 20. After "front line." add "All available ammunition wagons had been sent up by Br.-General E. M. Perceval, G.O.C. 2nd Division artillery."

Page 452, line 6 from bottom. For "Verey" read "Very".

Page 474. In *14th Brigade under 5th Division*. For "2 Suffolk R." read "1 Devon. R. (replaced in 8th Bde. 3rd Div. by 1/Gordons 1st Oct. 1914)."

Page 536. Index. For "Perceval, Lieut.-Col. E. M." read "Perceval, Br.-Gen. E. M."



ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO  
VOLUME II. (1914\*\*)

ADDITIONAL TO THOSE ISSUED WITH VOL. III.  
(Kindly pointed out by various correspondents.)

Page 305, footnote 2. For " Map 27 " read " Map 26 ".

Page 425, last line. For " 1/Bedfordshire " read " 2/Bedfordshire ".

Page 536, Index. Add " Rum, 433 ".

Page 540, Index. Delete entry as to 7th Hussars, as the text p. 423 refers  
to the French 7th Hussars.

Page 546, Index. Add under " Highlanders, Cameron " " 426 ".



ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME III. 4

Br.-General R. F. Fox ; 5th Division, Br.-General J. G. Geddes ; 27th Division, Br.-General A. Stokes ; 28th Division, Br.-General A. W. Gay ; 50th Division, Br.-General C. G. Henshaw ; 1st Canadian Division, Br.-General H. E. Burstall ; Lahore Division, Br.-General F. E. Johnson."

Page 414, Index. Add, under "Flying Corps, Royal . . . photography,"  
"85."





## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

Page 272, line 7 from bottom. For "south-east" read "south-west".

Page 452, line 5. Add footnote: "This seems to be the first official use of zero hour for starting time." Also index "zero hour".

### MAPS AND SKETCHES

Map 2. For "Gahrwal" read "Garhwal".

Sketches 4, 6, 7 and 8. For "Gahrwal" read "Garhwal".

Sketch 12. Transpose the positions of "1/Lincolnshire" and "10/L'pool R."

Sketch 14. "A and B 6/Som. L.I." should be shifted to the right into Zouave Wood.



## ADDENDA TO "1914" Vol. II

Page 65, line 11. After "the name of the IV. Corps." add footnote :

"The formation of the IV. Corps, consisting of the 7th and 8th Divisions (the latter did not begin to arrive in France until 11th November), is said in General von Seeckt's diary under date of 18th November to have first become known to him by reading an appeal by Lady Rawlinson in 'The Times' for warm clothing for her husband's troops." "Seeckt", by General von Rabenau, p. 82.

Page 417. Add to footnote 1 : "Lieut.-General Kabisch, who was present as senior General Staff Officer of the *III. Reserve Corps*, states in an appreciation of Falkenhayn in 'Der Rumanienkrieg', pp. 184-5, that before the attacks of the 10th/11th November 1914 Falkenhayn called for the opinion of the generals on the spot, and that 'all the corps commanders spoke in favour of the continuation of the attack, of the success of which they were convinced'."



## ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

- Page 136, footnote 2. Add : "The evacuation of the civil inhabitants of Amiens and of all supplies, machinery and effects was formally ordered on 9th April, but voluntary evacuation had begun on 22nd March."
- Page 152, line 7. For "N.N.E." read "S.S.E."
- Page 190. "Note : The Germans on the 9th April". At the beginning add : "The intention, as expressed in the orders of the *81st Division*, was : 'The *Sixth Army* is attacking in order to break through the Portuguese front and reach the enemy's rear. (Res. Regt. No. 269', p. 275)."
- Page 227, footnote 3. Add :  
"A 12-inch howitzer on railway mounting, which had been placed in position to enfilade the Estaires—La Bassée road and prevent the arrival of reinforcements, dropped a shell into the Grande Place."
- Page 327, footnote 2. Add : "The artillery remained in the line attached to other divisions".
- Page 350, footnote 2. Add :  
"General Foch also handed General Plumer a memorandum on the tactics of holding crest positions and 'points d'appui', illustrated in great detail by enumerating the various points on the Kemmel position which should be held. Diary of Lieut.-General Sir Alexander Gordon."
- Page 361, footnote 1. For "50th Dn artillery had been relieved" read "50th Dn artillery (less 251st Brigade R.F.A.) had been relieved".
- Page 373, heading. For "IX." read "XV."
- Page 421, line 9. For "21st Dn Composite Brigade" read "21st Composite Brigade", and add footnote :  
"The 21st Composite Brigade (see footnote 1 on p. 443) consisted of the survivors of 5 battalions of the 30th Dn (3 of the 21st Bde and 2 of the 90th Bde) organized as 3 battalions under Br.-General G. D. Goodman. On the 2nd May it was amalgamated with the 89th Bde to form the 30th Dn Composite Brigade."
- Page 426, line 6. For "21st Dn Composite Brigade" read "21st Composite Brigade".
- Page 435, line 3 from foot. For "21st Dn Composite Brigade" read "21st Composite Brigade".
- Page 470, line 9 from foot. After "in jeopardy in 1918." add footnote :  
"As long ago as December, when the question of releasing troops from home for the Western Front had been brought up, Wemyss, taking upon himself far greater responsibility than any of his predecessors, had advised the Cabinet to take the risk of diminishing the troops in England for home defence, convinced as he was that the Navy would suffice for resisting invasion. This proposal, however, was not reflected in any appreciable reduction of our Home Defence, because Mr. Lloyd George would not let young men be sent





# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

	PAGE
THE EXPANSION OF THE ARMY . . . . .	2
THE CONTROL OF WAR POLICY . . . . .	10
MUNITIONS . . . . .	11
THE HOUSING, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY OF THE ARMY AND NEW ARMIES . . . . .	17
EXPEDITIONS AGAINST THE GERMAN COLONIES . . . . .	20
<i>Note</i> : Cabinet Committee on Munitions . . . . .	25

## CHAPTER I

### ANTWERP. 19TH SEPTEMBER-6TH OCTOBER 1914 :

The General Situation in the North at the end of September 1914 . . . . .	27
The Siege of Antwerp . . . . .	32
The Evacuation of Antwerp commenced . . . . .	35
The Germans break through the Outer Forts . . . . .	37
The Withdrawal to the Nethe . . . . .	38
The Despatch of British Assistance to Antwerp . . . . .	39
The Retirement from the Nethe . . . . .	42
The German Attempt to cross the Schelde . . . . .	45
The Withdrawal of the Belgian Field Army from Antwerp . . . . .	46

## CHAPTER II

### ANTWERP (*concluded*). 7TH-14TH OCTOBER 1914 :

The Landing of the British 7th Division . . . . .	49
The Germans close in on Antwerp . . . . .	50
The Decision to evacuate Antwerp . . . . .	52
The Operations of the British 7th Division and Landing of the 3rd Cavalry Division . . . . .	54
The 8th October at Antwerp . . . . .	55
The Evacuation of Antwerp . . . . .	57
The Operations round Ghent . . . . .	64
The Withdrawal to the Yser and to Ypres . . . . .	66

## CHAPTER III

	PAGE
THE EXTENSION OF THE FRONT IN FLANDERS BY THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. THE ADVANCE OF THE II. CORPS TO LA BASSÉE. THE BATTLE OF LA BASSÉE. 8TH-22ND OCTOBER 1914 :	
The Arrival of the B.E.F. in Flanders . . . . .	68
Description of the Country . . . . .	73
The Plan of Advance . . . . .	76
11th-20th October : The Attempt of the II. Corps to turn the German Flank : The Battle of La Bassée . . . . .	77
21st October : The Attack on the 3rd Division . . . . .	87
22nd October : The Wheel back of the Left of the II. Corps . . . . .	89
Notes : I. The Indian Corps . . . . .	92
II. Letter from General Maud'huy commanding the French Tenth Army . . . . .	92

## CHAPTER IV

THE EXTENSION OF THE FRONT IN FLANDERS BY THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE ( <i>concluded</i> ). THE ADVANCE OF THE CAVALRY CORPS AND THE III. CORPS AND THEIR JUNCTION WITH THE IV. CORPS. THE BATTLES OF ARMENTIÈRES AND MESSINES. 12TH-18TH OCTOBER 1914 :	
12th October : The Advance of the III. Corps and Cavalry Corps to the Lys. The Battles of Messines and Armentières . . . . .	94
13th October : The Capture of Meteren . . . . .	96
14th October : The Occupation of Bailleul and Messines ; the Completion of the Line from Belfort to the Sea . . . . .	98
15th October : The Advance to the Lys . . . . .	100
16th October : The Attempt at a General Advance Eastwards . . . . .	103
17th October : The Occupation of Armentières . . . . .	106
18th October : The Eve of the Battles of Ypres . . . . .	109
Operations of the III. Corps : The Attempt to secure Pérenchies Ridge . . . . .	110
Operations of the Cavalry Corps . . . . .	115
Move of the IV. Corps towards Menin . . . . .	115
The German Attack on the Belgian Army. The Battle of the Yser . . . . .	117
Intelligence of the Enemy . . . . .	118
Situation on Night of the 18th-19th October . . . . .	119
Notes : I. German Operations in Flanders from the Fall of Antwerp to the 18th October 1914 . . . . .	121
II. The German Reserve Corps of 1914 . . . . .	123

CHAPTER V

	PAGE
THE BATTLES OF YPRES. THE FIRST PHASE : THE ENCOUNTER BATTLE ; THE FRANCO - BRITISH ATTEMPT TO ADVANCE, AND THE GENERAL ATTACK OF THE GERMAN <i>FOURTH</i> AND <i>SIXTH</i> ARMIES. 19TH-21ST OCTOBER 1914 :	
The Plans of the Belligerents . . . . .	125
The Country round Ypres . . . . .	128
19th October : Collision with the new German Forces :	
The IV. Corps and the Left. The Attempt of the 7th Division to advance on Menin . . . . .	131
The Cavalry Corps and the III. Corps maintain their Positions . . . . .	135
The I. Corps is ordered to Ypres . . . . .	136
20th October : The First Day of the Attack of the German <i>SIXTH</i> and <i>FOURTH</i> ARMIES :	
III. Corps : Loss of Ennetières and Prêmesques . . . . .	138
Cavalry Corps : Retirement before Superior Forces . . . . .	143
IV. Corps : Reconnaissance stopped and Retirement of the Left . . . . .	144
I. Corps : Arrival at Ypres . . . . .	146
21st October : Battle is joined along the whole Front :	
Battle of Armentières—Messines—Langemarek . . . . .	148
III. Corps : Battle of Armentières. Loss and recapture of Le Gheer. Loss of Le Maisnil . . . . .	149
Cavalry Corps : Battle of Messines. A Day on the Defensive . . . . .	152
IV. Corps : Battle of Langemarek. The 7th Division holds its own . . . . .	154
I. Corps : Battle of Langemarek. A Short Successful Advance . . . . .	157
Employment of Artillery . . . . .	164
French and Belgians on the Left of the British . . . . .	166
The General Situation on the Night of the 21st/22nd October 1914 . . . . .	166
<i>Note</i> : The Germans on the 19th, 20th and 21st October . . . . .	168

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLES OF YPRES (*continued*). BATTLE OF LANGEMARCK. I. AND IV. CORPS. 22ND-24TH OCTOBER 1914 :

22nd October : The British on the Defensive round Ypres . . . . .	172
Attacks on the 7th Division near Zandvoorde—Beeelaere fail . . . . .	176
Attacks on 2nd Division between Zonnebeke and Langemarek fail . . . . .	178

	PAGE
The 1st Division holds its own, except in the centre at Kortekeer Cabaret . . . . .	179
The General Situation of the Belgians and the French. Plans for an Offensive . . . . .	182
23rd October: The French 17th Division reinforces the British: The Situation of the 1st Division restored	184
The 2nd Division holds its own, and at Night is relieved by the French 17th Division . . . . .	188
The IV. Corps holds its own . . . . .	189
The General Situation on the Night of the 23rd/24th . . . . .	190
24th October: The Counter-Attack near Ypres by the French and 2nd Division. Loss and Recapture of Polygon Wood :	
The Operations of the French IX. Corps . . . . .	192
The Attack of the French 17th Division . . . . .	194
The Relief of the 1st Division . . . . .	194
7th Division: The Loss and Recapture of Polygon Wood . . . . .	195
The 2nd Division relieves the Left of the 7th Division and co-operates in the French Counter-Attack . . . . .	199
Attack on the Right of the 7th Division near Gheluvelt	201
Situation round Ypres on the Night of the 24th/25th	202
Lack of Gun Ammunition . . . . .	203
The Belgian and French Coastal Force on the 24th October 1914 . . . . .	203
<i>Note</i> : The Situation on the German side on the Night of the 24th/25th October . . . . .	204

## CHAPTER VII

### OPERATIONS OF THE II. CORPS. THE BATTLE OF LA BASSÉE (concluded). 23RD OCTOBER-2ND NOVEMBER 1914 :

23rd-25th October: General Situation near La Bassée . . . . .	205
26th-27th October: The Loss of Neuve Chapelle . . . . .	211
28th October: Failure of the Counter-Attack on Neuve Chapelle . . . . .	216
29th October: The German Final Effort to break through the II. Corps . . . . .	220
30th October-2nd November: Relief of the II. by the Indian Corps and End of the Battle of La Bassée . . . . .	221
<i>Note</i> : The Germans at the Battle of La Bassée . . . . .	223

## CHAPTER VIII

### OPERATIONS OF THE III. CORPS AND THE CAVALRY CORPS AT THE END OF OCTOBER 1914. THE BATTLES OF ARMENTIÈRES AND MESSINES :

Operations of the III. Corps. Battle of Armentières (concluded). 22nd October-2nd November 1914 . . . . .	225
Operations of the Cavalry Corps. Battle of Messines (concluded). 22nd-24th October 1914 . . . . .	231

## CHAPTER IX

	PAGE
THE BATTLES OF YPRES ( <i>continued</i> ). ATTEMPTED RENEWAL OF THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE, 25TH-28TH OCTOBER 1914 :	
25th October : A Day of Fighting but of little Progress : Advance of the French IX. Corps and British 2nd Division . . . . .	234
The Cavalry Corps . . . . .	240
General Situation on the Night of the 25th/26th October . . . . .	241
26th October : No Progress. Loss of the Kruseecke Salient :	
The French and the I. and IV. Corps . . . . .	242
The Cavalry Corps . . . . .	250
General Situation on the Night of the 26th/27th October . . . . .	251
27th and 28th October : Deadlock :	
The French IX. and British I. Corps . . . . .	252
The Cavalry Corps . . . . .	257
General Situation in the North on the 28th/29th October . . . . .	257
Notes : I. The German Plans . . . . .	259
II. The British Lines of Communication, October-November 1914 :	
(1) Dates on which the Northern Ports were reopened . . . . .	260
(2) The Railway Routes taken by British Traffic during the Battles of Ypres . . . . .	260
(3) Railheads during the Battles of Ypres . . . . .	260

## CHAPTER X

THE BATTLES OF YPRES ( <i>continued</i> ). BATTLE OF GHELVELT, 29TH-31ST OCTOBER 1914. THE FIRST DAY, 29TH OCTOBER. LOSS OF GHELVELT CROSS ROADS :	
Orders for the Day . . . . .	262
I. Corps : The First German Attack . . . . .	265
I. Corps : The Further German Attacks and the Counter-Attack . . . . .	269
The Cavalry Corps . . . . .	274
General Situation in the North on the Night of the 29th/30th October . . . . .	275
Note : German Forces engaged on 29th October near Ghelvelt . . . . .	277



## CHAPTER XI

	PAGE
THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT ( <i>continued</i> ). THE SECOND DAY, 30TH OCTOBER 1914. THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S ARMY GROUP AND LOSS OF ZANDVOORDE AND HOLLEBEKE :	
The Eve of Fabeck's Attack . . . . .	278
The German Dispositions . . . . .	281
The Opposing Forces . . . . .	282
2nd and 1st Divisions. The German Attack on the British Left fails . . . . .	284
7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division till Noon. The German Attack on and the Loss of Zandvoorde . . . . .	285
2nd Cavalry Division. The German Attack on and the Loss of Hollebeke and Hollebeke Chateau . . . . .	290
1st Cavalry Division and 4th Division. The German Attack against Messines—Wyttschaete—St. Yves fails . . . . .	292
7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division, Noon till Night. Reconstitution of the British Line opposite Zand- voorde. French co-operation. Formation of Bulfin's Force . . . . .	293
British Situation at Nightfall . . . . .	296
General Situation in the North on the Night of the 30th/31st October. The Yser Inundation is effective . . . . .	299
Note : The Germans on the 30th October . . . . .	301

## CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT. THE CRISIS, 31ST OCTOBER 1914. THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S ARMY GROUP ( <i>continued</i> ). LOSS OF PART OF MESSINES. LOSS AND RECAPTURE OF GHELUVELT :	
The Enemy's Plans . . . . .	303
The Attack on Messines. 1st Cavalry Division and 4th Division . . . . .	304
The Attack on Wyttschaete. 2nd Cavalry Division . . . . .	310
The Attack on Gheluveld. 1st Division . . . . .	312
The Attack on Gheluveld Chateau and Counter-Attack of the South Wales Borderers. 1st Division . . . . .	320
The Catastrophe to the 1st and 2nd Divisions Staffs . . . . .	323
The Counter-Attack of the 2/Worcestershire, 2nd Division . . . . .	328
The Attack on Veldhoek. 1st Division . . . . .	330
The Fighting on the Right Wing of the I. Corps (Bulfin's Force and 7th Division), and Counter-Attack of Bulfin's Force . . . . .	332
The Fighting on the Left Wing of the I. Corps. 2nd Division . . . . .	339
General Situation in the North . . . . .	341
Situation of the B.E.F. North of the Lys on the Night of the 31st October/1st November . . . . .	345
Note : The Germans on the 31st October . . . . .	347



CHAPTER XIII

	PAGE
THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT. 1ST NOVEMBER 1914. THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S ARMY GROUP ( <i>continued</i> ):	
Evacuation of Messines . . . . .	348
The Right: The 4th Division, Cavalry Corps and French 32nd Division. The Night Attack on Wytschaete and the Withdrawal from Messines . . . . .	349
The Right Centre: Moussy's Detachment, Bulfin's Force and the 7th Division . . . . .	356
The Left Centre: The 1st Division . . . . .	358
The Left: The 2nd Division and Bernard's Detachment . . . . .	359
General Situation on the Evening of the 1st November . . . . .	359
Note: The German Operations on the 1st November . . . . .	361

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT. 2ND NOVEMBER 1914. THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S ARMY GROUP ( <i>continued</i> ). LOSS OF WYTSCHAETE:	
The Right: The 4th Division, Cavalry Corps, Conneau's Cavalry Corps, the French 39th and 32nd Divisions and Olleris' Detachment. Loss of Wytschaete . . . . .	362
The Centre: Cavan's Force. 7th Division and 1st Division. Disaster to the 1/K.R.R.C., and further Withdrawal near Gheluvelt . . . . .	366
The Left: The 2nd Division and French IX. Corps . . . . .	371
General Situation on the Evening of the 2nd November . . . . .	372
Note: The German Operations on the 2nd November . . . . .	374

CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT. 3RD, 4TH AND 5TH NOVEMBER 1914. THE GRADUAL DYING DOWN OF THE FRENCH AND GERMAN OFFENSIVES. THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S ARMY GROUP ( <i>concluded</i> ):	
3rd November:	
French Offensive continued without success . . . . .	376
4th November:	
Decrease in Enemy Infantry Attacks. Shortage of British Field Artillery Ammunition . . . . .	379
5th November:	
Loss of Spanbroekmolen by the French. Increased Enemy Artillery Activity . . . . .	381
Relief of the 7th Division and 3rd Infantry Brigade . . . . .	383
General Situation in the North . . . . .	387
Note: German Plans for the Continuation of the Battle . . . . .	391

## CHAPTER XVI

	PAGE
THE BATTLES OF YPRES ( <i>continued</i> ). RENEWAL OF THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE. ZWARTELEEN, ST. ELOI, DIXMUDE. 6TH, 7TH, 8TH, 9TH AND 10TH NOVEMBER 1914 :	
6th November : German Advance on either Side of the Comines Canal. Loss of Zwarteleen and Hollebeke Woods . . . . .	393
7th November : Counter-Attack of Lawford's Brigade at Zwarteleen. German Attacks on Le Touquet, Ploegsteert Wood, Herenthage Wood and Brood seinde . . . . .	397
8th November : Dangerous Situation near the Comines Canal. Spasmodic German Attacks. Failure to recover Le Gheer. Serious Fighting on the Menin Road . . . . .	404
9th November : The French regain Ground near the Comines Canal. A Night Attack to recover Le Gheer fails . . . . .	409
10th November : German Attacks North-East of Ypres and the Loss of Dixmude . . . . .	411
Situation on the Night of the 10th/11th November . . . . .	415
Note : German Operations and Plans . . . . .	417

## CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF NONNE BOSSCHEN. 11TH NOVEMBER 1914. THE GREAT GERMAN ATTACK ON THE FRONT FROM MESSINES TO POLYGON WOOD. HERENTHAGE—VELDHIOEK WOODS—NONNE BOSSCHEN—POLYGON WOOD :	
The Preliminaries . . . . .	419
The Allied Right : Conneau's Cavalry, XVI. Corps, Vidal's Detachment, Cavan's Force . . . . .	422
The Allied Centre : Wing's Division of the II. Corps, 1st (Guards) Brigade and 1/King's . . . . .	425
The Attack on the Right, and Centre of Wing's Division at Herenthage . . . . .	427
The Attack on Shaw's Brigade, astride the Menin Road . . . . .	428
The success of the German <i>1st Guard Brigade</i> against FitzClarence's Brigade. The Resistance of the Strong Points and of the 1/King's . . . . .	432
The Counter-attack of the 2/Oxfordshire Light Infantry . . . . .	440
The Death of Br.-General FitzClarence . . . . .	443
The Allied Left : 2nd Division, French IX. Corps, de Mitry's Detachment, XXXII. Corps and the Belgian Army . . . . .	445
General Situation on the Night of the 11th/12th November . . . . .	446

# CONTENTS

XXI  
PAGE

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CLOSE OF THE BATTLES OF YPRES. 12TH TO 22ND NOVEMBER 1914 :

General Conditions between the 11th and 22nd November	447
12th November : Surprise Attack on the French IX. Corps	451
13th November : Renewed Attack on the French IX. Corps, and Attack on Wing's Division of the II. Corps	453
14th November : Renewed Attacks on Wing's Division	454
15th-22nd November : Relief of the I. Corps and Re- organization of the British Line	458
Retrospect	460
Notes : I. The British Losses	466
II. The German Losses	467
III. Medical Arrangements during the Fighting in October and November 1914	469

## TABLE OF APPENDICES

1. Order of Battle of the British Expeditionary Force	473
2. List of Yeomanry Regiments in France in 1914	486
3. List of Royal Engineer Companies (S.R. and T.F.) in France in 1914	486
4. List of Infantry Battalions (T.F.) in France in 1914	487
5. Order of Battle of the Détachement d'Armée de Belgique, on 11th November 1914	489
6. Order of Battle of the German Army in Flanders	492
7. Text of the Public Notice, calling to arms 100,000 men ; 7th August 1914	497
8. Instructions by the Secretary of State to Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Bart., C.V.O., C.B., dated 5th October 1914	497
9. Instructions to Major-General T. Capper, C.B., D.S.O., commanding 7th Division, dated 4th October 1914	499
10. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 32, 8th October 1914	499
11. Sir John French's Instructions to Cavalry Corps (O.A. 383), 3.45 P.M. 9th October 1914	500
12. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 33, 7.30 P.M. 10th October 1914	501
13. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 34, 9 P.M. 11th October 1914	502
14. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 35, 7.30 P.M. 12th October 1914	503
15. III. Corps Operation Order, 11.15 A.M. 13th October 1914	504
16. 5th Division Operation Order No. 5, 1.15 P.M. 13th October 1914	504

	PAGE
17. 6th Division Operation Order No. 13, 12 noon 13th October 1914 . . . . .	505
18. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 476), 9.30 P.M. 14th October 1914 . . . . .	506
19. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 500), 1.40 P.M. 15th October 1914 . . . . .	507
20. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 37, 8.30 P.M. 16th October 1914 . . . . .	507
21. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 38, 7.10 P.M. 17th October 1914 . . . . .	508
22. III. Corps Operation Order No. 28, 11.55 P.M. 17th October 1914 . . . . .	510
23. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 561), 8.30 P.M. 18th October 1914 . . . . .	510
24. IV. Corps Operation Order No. 2, 11 P.M. 18th October 1914 . . . . .	511
25. 7th Division Operation Order No. 19, 8.30 P.M. 18th October 1914 . . . . .	512
26. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 585), 9 P.M. 19th October 1914 . . . . .	513
27. G.H.Q. Instructions to IV. Corps (O.A. 587), 9.5 P.M. 19th October 1914 . . . . .	514
28. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 39, 9.30 P.M. 20th October 1914 . . . . .	514
29. I. Corps Operation Order No. 19, 10 P.M. 20th October 1914 . . . . .	515
30. 1st Division Operation Order No. 31, 12.50 A.M. 21st October 1914 . . . . .	516
31. 2nd Division Operation Order No. 26, 1.30 A.M. 21st October 1914 . . . . .	518
32. Telegram from Sir John French to Earl Kitchener, 22nd October 1914 . . . . .	519
33. Sir John French's Operation Order No. 40, 10 P.M. 24th October 1914 . . . . .	520
34. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 758), 7.45 P.M. 25th October 1914 . . . . .	521
35. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 794), 6.15 P.M. 26th October 1914 . . . . .	521
36. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 817), 6.30 P.M. 27th October 1914 . . . . .	522
37. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 837), 8.15 P.M. 28th October 1914 . . . . .	522
38. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 870), 9.50 P.M. 29th October 1914 . . . . .	522
39. I. Corps Operation Order No. 28, 7.5 P.M. 30th October 1914 . . . . .	523
40. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 932), 9 P.M. 31st October 1914 . . . . .	523
41. I. Corps Operation Order No. 29, 7 P.M., and Supplementary Order, 11.15 P.M. 31st October 1914 . . . . .	524
42. I. Corps Operation Order No. 31, 8.30 P.M. 2nd November 1914 . . . . .	525
43. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 64), 11.45 P.M. 3rd November 1914 . . . . .	526
44. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 86), 11.50 P.M. 4th November 1914 . . . . .	526
45. G.H.Q. Order (O.A. 114), 11.35 P.M. 5th November 1914 . . . . .	526
General Index . . . . .	527
Index to Arms, Formations and Units . . . . .	539

# SKETCHES AND MAPS

## SKETCHES

(Bound in Volume)

Sketch	A. Ypres (layered sketch)	.	.	.	<i>End paper</i>
"	1. Antwerp Operations, 19th Sept.-15th Oct. 1914	.	.	.	<i>Facing p. 27</i>
"	2. Defences of Antwerp, 1914	.	.	.	" " 31
"	3. Advance of Cavalry, II. and III. Corps, B.E.F., 8th-15th Oct. 1914	.	.	.	" " 69
"	5. The Fighting of the II. and III. Corps, B.E.F., 19th Oct.-2nd Nov.	.	.	.	" " 83
"	4. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 18th-21st Oct.	.	.	.	" " 109
"	6. Situation, 20th Oct. 1914	.	.	.	" " 125
"	7. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 22nd and 23rd Oct.	.	.	.	" " 173
"	8. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 24th and 25th Oct.	.	.	.	" " 191
"	9. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 26th-29th Oct.	.	.	.	" " 241
"	10. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 30th and 31st Oct.	.	.	.	" " 279
"	11. Defence of Gheluvelt, 31st Oct. 1914	.	.	.	" " 319
"	12. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 1st-4th Nov.	.	.	.	" " 349
"	13. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 5th-9th Nov.	.	.	.	" " 381
"	14. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 10th-11th Nov.	.	.	.	" " 411
"	15. Situation, 10th Nov. 1914	.	.	.	" " 415
"	16. The German Guard Attack, 11th Nov. 1914	.	.	.	" " 425
"	B. La Bassée (layered sketch)	.	.	.	<i>End paper</i>



## MAPS

*(In Separate Case)*

- Map 1. North-West Europe. Antwerp, Ypres, and La Bassée, 1/250,000.
- „ 2. Ypres, 1914. 1/40,000 (layered map).
- „ 3. Antwerp, 1914. Operations, 19th Sept.-2nd Oct.
- „ 4. Antwerp, 1914. Operations, 3rd-8th Oct.
- „ 5. Antwerp, 1914. Operations, 9th-15th Oct.
- „ 6. Arrival of the B.E.F. in Flanders. 8th-11th Oct.
- „ 7. Advance of the Cavalry Corps, and II. and III. Corps, B.E.F. 12th-15th Oct. 1914.
- „ 8. Operations of the II. Corps, B.E.F. 16th-19th Oct. 1914.
- „ 9. Operations of the II. Corps, B.E.F. 20th-24th Oct. 1914.
- „ 10. Advance of the Cavalry Corps, and III. and IV. Corps, B.E.F. 16th-18th Oct. 1914.
- „ 11. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. Sunday, 18th Oct. 1914.
- „ 12. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 19th Oct. 1914.
- „ 13. Operations of the III. Corps, B.E.F. 19th Oct.-2nd Nov. 1914.
- „ 14. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 20th Oct. 1914.
- „ 15. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 21st Oct. 1914.
- „ 16. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 22nd Oct. 1914.
- „ 17. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 23rd Oct. 1914.
- „ 18. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 24th Oct. 1914.
- „ 19. Operations of the II. Corps, B.E.F. 25th Oct.-2nd Nov. 1914.
- „ 20. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. Sunday, 25th Oct. 1914.
- „ 21. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 26th Oct. 1914.
- „ 22. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 27th Oct. 1914.
- „ 23. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 28th Oct. 1914.
- „ 24. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 29th Oct. 1914.
- „ 25. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 30th Oct. 1914.
- „ 26. Defence of Messines and Wytschaete. 31st Oct. 1914.
- „ 27. Defence of Gheluvelt. The Critical Day. 31st Oct. 1914.
- „ 28. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 31st Oct. 1914.
- „ 29. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. Sunday, 1st Nov. 1914.
- „ 30. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 2nd Nov. 1914.
- „ 31. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 3rd Nov. 1914.
- „ 32. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 4th Nov. 1914.
- „ 33. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 5th Nov. 1914.
- „ 34. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 6th Nov. 1914.
- „ 35. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 7th Nov. 1914.
- „ 36. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. Sunday, 8th Nov. 1914.
- „ 37. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 9th Nov. 1914.
- „ 38. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 10th Nov. 1914.
- „ 39. The Battles of Ypres, 1914. 11th Nov. 1914.
- „ 40. Situation, Western Front, 15th Dec. 1914.

## LIST OF BOOKS

TO WHICH MOST FREQUENT REFERENCE IS MADE<sup>1</sup>

**ANTWERPEN :** "Antwerpen 1914". Herausgegeben unter Mitwirkung des Reichsarchiv. (Oldenburg : Stalling.)

An official account of the capture of Antwerp, with many illustrations and sketch maps, in the series commenced in 1917 by the General Staff of the German Field Army.

**BAUMANN :** "Mit der Garde im Westen". By Domprediger Baumann. (Halle : Mühlmann.)

The author was volunteer chaplain with the *4th Guard Brigade*, and was at Ypres 1914 with the *Guard*. The book contains letters and extracts from his diary.

**BAVARIA :** "Die Bayern im Grossen Kriege 1914-1918". Herausgegeben vom Bayerischen Kriegsarchiv. (Munich : Verlag des Bayerischen Kriegsarchiv.)

An official account of the operations of the Bavarian forces.

**B.B.S.M. :** "Bulletin Belge des Sciences Militaires".

A monthly journal, edited by the Belgian General Staff, in which an account of the Belgian operations is appearing in serial form.

**BELGIUM, MILITARY OPERATIONS OF ; 1914.** Report (translation) compiled by the Commander-in-Chief of the Belgian Army for the period 31st July to 31st December 1914. (London : Collingridge, 1s.)

**BOULLAIRE :** "Historique du 2<sup>o</sup> Corps de Cavalerie du 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 1914 au 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1919". By General Boullaire. (Paris : Charles-Lavauzelle, 25 francs.)

A history of the Cavalry Corps commanded in Flanders in 1914 by General de Mitry ; compiled from official documents.

**DEGUISE :** "La Défense de la Position fortifiée d'Anvers en 1914". By Lieut.-General Deguise. (Brussels : Weissenbruch, 25 francs.)

The author was commandant of the fortress of Antwerp from 8th September 1914 until its capitulation. It describes the state of the fortress before the war and the defence.

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the fluctuations of the mark, the price of German books is not quoted.



**DUBOIS**: "Deux Ans de Commandement sur le Front de France 1914-16". By General Dubois (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2 vols., 25 francs.)

The author commanded the French IX. Corps, which fought on the left of the B.E.F. at Ypres. Vol. II. contains an excellent account of the operations of the IX. Corps and its detachments at Ypres. Vol. I. deals with the writer's earlier experiences in the war.

**D'URBAL**: An article in "Revue Militaire Générale": January 1921. The writer commanded the Eighth Army, which comprised all the French troops near Ypres.

**FALKENHAYN**: "General Headquarters 1914-1916 and its Critical Decisions". By General Erich von Falkenhayn. (English translation, Hutchinson & Co., 21s.)

Falkenhayn was Prussian Minister of War in 1914; and Chief of the General Staff from September 1914 to August 1916, when he was superseded by Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. He died in 1923. A well-written, reliable account of his work.

**LUDENDORFF**: "My War Memories". (English translation, Hutchinson & Co., 2 vols., 34s.) By General Erich Ludendorff.

The first of Ludendorff's four books on the war.

**MARINEKORPS**: "Das Marinekorps in Flandern (1914-1918)". By Korvetten-Kapitän Schulze. (Berlin: Mittler.)

A history of the Marine Corps, which defended the Flemish coast, compiled from official sources by an officer who was on its staff throughout the war.

**M.W.B.**: "Militär Wochenblatt". (Berlin: Mittler.)

The principal German military journal, formerly published thrice weekly, now once a week.

**PALAT**: "La Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental". By General Palat. (Paris: Chapelot, 9 vols., 12 francs each.)

The author is best known by his pseudonym Pierre Lehautcourt. A valuable unofficial compilation as regards the movements of the French. The eighth volume describes the fighting at Ypres, the ninth the December battle 1914 and the offensives of 1915.

**POSECK**: "Die deutsche Kavallerie in Belgien und Frankreich 1914". By Generalleutnant von Poseck. (Berlin: Mittler.)

The author was Chief of the Staff of the I. Cavalry Corps and is now Inspector of Cavalry. It is a very valuable summary of the German cavalry operations, based on the official records. It has been translated in the United States.

**REGIMENT NO. ...**

These are the regimental war histories of German units, of which the Historical Section already possesses 240. Nearly all of them are in the series "Erinnerungsblätter deutscher Regimenter", published by Gerhard Stalling of Oldenburg. The history of the 5 Westfälisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 53, for instance, is quoted as "Regiment No. 53". The volumes in the series are of varying length and value: some give detailed accounts of the fighting with extracts from the reminiscences of combatants; others merely reproduce the official war diaries.

RONARC'H : "Souvenirs de la Guerre (août 1914-septembre 1915)". By Vice-Amiral Ronarc'h. (Paris : Payot, 16 francs.)

The author commanded the French Naval Brigade at Dixmude. A valuable account in diary form.

SCHWARTE : "Der grosse Krieg 1914-1918". By Generalmajor M. Schwarte. (Leipzig : Barth.)

This is an encyclopædia of the war in ten volumes, containing articles by many eminent generals, and edited by General Schwarte.

S. UND G. : "Die Schlachten und Gefechte des grossen Krieges 1914-1918 zusammengestellt vom grossen Generalstab". (Berlin : Sack.)

An official list of the battles compiled by the Great General Staff, showing the formations, etc., engaged in each; and giving lists of the higher commanders, with an excellent index.

VOGEL : "3,000 Kilometer mit der Garde-Kavallerie". By Hofprediger Dr. Vogel. (Leipzig : Velhagen und Klasing.)

The author was chaplain of the Guard Cavalry Division, and the book is practically a war diary of the division.

WISSEN UND WEHR : A new German quarterly military journal.

WRISBERG : "Erinnerungen an die Kriegsjahre im Königlich-Preussischen Kriegsministerium". By Generalmajor Ernst von Wrisberg. (Leipzig : Koehler.)

The author was head of the principal department of the Prussian War Ministry. His three volumes deal with mobilization, organization, man power and munitions.

YPRES : "Die Schlacht an der Yser und bei Ypern im Herbst 1914. Herausgegeben im Auftrage des Generalstabes des Feldheeres". (Oldenburg : Stalling.) Translated under the title of "Ypres 1914". (Constable, 5s.)

The references in the volume are to the translation, which has been revised, where necessary, when quoted. The original, the official account of the battles, was issued in the autumn of 1917, with an introduction by the General Staff of the German Field Army.



## INTRODUCTION

EXPANSION OF THE ARMY ; THE CONTROL OF WAR POLICY ;  
MUNITIONS ; THE HOUSING, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY  
OF THE ARMIES ; EXPEDITIONS AGAINST THE GERMAN  
COLONIES

WHILST the British Expeditionary Force was playing its part in bringing to a standstill and then rolling back to the Aisne the great German onrush, the British Empire was slowly making the first movements to assemble those troops and acquire those material means that it was obvious would be indispensable if the war was to be brought to a successful conclusion. The German plan, long evolved and well tested at war games and staff tours, which was to have decided the campaign in the West in six weeks, had failed ; and Britain, behind her advanced guard of professional soldiers and her fleets, had leisure to organize her resources. Already had fear entered into the hearts of the rulers of Germany that, in their haste to dominate Europe and the world, they had struck against a real World-Power ; and that this Power, centuries established, tenacious of purpose, and never yet brought to her knees, stood between them and victory. It was for Britain to ensure that this fear should never cease to grow and should finally become a certainty. Time, much time, was requisite to collect and organize the strength of the Empire ; but that this strength was ever there remained a factor which the enemy could not afford to disregard and which those fighting for Britain never forgot—even when from the Allies' point of view the situation seemed most hopeless.

There is no space here to do full justice to the preparations which were made at home and in other parts of the Empire during the months which immediately followed the outbreak of hostilities, but the elements of the subject must be borne in mind throughout the story of the autumn

and winter of 1914.<sup>1</sup> Lack of trained men and of war material was a cause of serious difficulty and of grave embarrassment to leaders both at home and in the field, then and for many a day to come. It affected so greatly the problem which lay before the British Naval and Military authorities that an outline of the measures taken to cope with it forms a suitable introduction to the narrative of the later part of the military operations in 1914.

### THE EXPANSION OF THE ARMY

On the 4th August, 1914, when war was declared, the Army Reserve and Special Reserve—the old Militia—amounting in all to about two hundred thousand men, had been called up. The members of the Territorial Force, the majority of whom were then under canvas for their annual training, had been mobilized to a total of about two hundred and fifty thousand men.

On the same day an Army Order was issued authorizing the immediate enlistment of specialists, such as artificers, motor cyclists, hospital subordinates and motor-car drivers; and two days later a further Army Order was promulgated permitting ex-soldiers of the Regular Army to re-enlist in the Special Reserve for one year or for the duration of the war.

On the 5th August the House of Commons authorized an increase of the Regular Army by 500,000 men, thus trebling its establishment. The conditions of service were fixed at three years or the duration of the war, with the age limits of nineteen and thirty. Lord Kitchener, on becoming Secretary of State for War on the 6th August 1914, at once took up the question of reinforcements for the Army. As a first step, he detained over five hundred British and Indian Army officers then on leave from India.

The Regular Army, together with the Reserve and Special Reserve, numbered 450,000 men. Of these, 118,000 were serving in India or other stations abroad.<sup>2</sup> Of the Territorial Force, 17,621 men had undertaken the "General

<sup>1</sup> Much material has been collected during the compilation of this chapter, and may perhaps be issued in a special volume in later years. A vast variety of figures and information will be found in the War Office 880-page publication: "Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920" (H.M. Stationery Office, 10s. 6d.).

<sup>2</sup> In round numbers, 76,000 in India, 8,000 in South Africa, 6,000 in Egypt, 28,000 elsewhere.



Service obligation" to serve overseas, if required, in time of national danger.<sup>1</sup> Thus the total force, including Reserves, immediately available for service on the Continent was some three hundred and fifty thousand men, and in their absence overseas the Territorial Force was to take over the defence of the United Kingdom. The despatch of the Expeditionary Force left it practically denuded of Regular field troops, there being in Great Britain after the 6th Division had embarked (exclusive of certain artillery cadres) only the three regiments of Household Cavalry (less a service squadron of each), seven horse artillery batteries and five battalions of the Regular Army. On the 5th August it was decided to bring home all the troops that could be spared from garrisons overseas and to form new divisions with them, replacing them abroad by units of the Territorial Force and, in the case of Egypt, by Indian troops. August 1914.

In the Haldane scheme for the Territorial Force it had been contemplated that any great expansion of the Army, or of the Territorial Force beyond its normal fourteen divisions and fourteen mounted brigades,<sup>2</sup> would be carried out through the agency of the County Associations. Lord Kitchener, however, conceived that the gigantic effort—which he at once foresaw was necessary—must be conducted on other lines, in the form of New Armies, neither limited by the peculiar class conditions of the Regulars, nor tied by the home service restrictions of the Territorial Force. He had in view the formation within three years of seventy new divisions, whilst still keeping up to strength the divisions of the Regular Army and of the Territorial Force.

On the 7th August the Secretary of State, by means of posters and notices in the newspapers, announced the immediate call to arms of 100,000 recruits to form the first New Army of six divisions.<sup>3</sup> This contingent, "the First Hundred Thousand", was obtained within a few days, but as it numbered three times as many men as usually enlisted in the Army in a whole year, the existing machinery proved to be totally inadequate for dealing with this sudden inrush of recruits. Instructors, officers and non-commissioned officers were lacking; and, although accom-

<sup>1</sup> Only five complete T.F. units had signed the General Service obligation prior to outbreak of war, viz. :—the Northumberland Yeomanry, the Dorset Fortress Company R.E., 6th East Surrey, and the 7th and 8th Middlesex.

<sup>2</sup> For the original formation of the Territorial Force, see Volume I. p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix No. 7.

modation was gradually provided—first in public buildings and billets, and later on in tents—clothing, arms and equipment were insufficient even for training purposes. The re-enlistment of ex-non-commissioned officers of the Regular Army was authorized on the 17th August; and these, with Regular officers doing duty at the depots, those on leave from India detained by Lord Kitchener's order, the Reserve of Officers, retired officers, convalescent wounded officers, T.F. officers attached to the Officers Training Corps, and selected warrant and non-commissioned officers promoted to commissioned rank, provided the nucleus of the cadres and ensured the enforcement of the elements of discipline.<sup>1</sup> But the difficulties of housing, feeding and clothing the men became so great that in the middle of September—when the total number of recruits reached 500,000<sup>2</sup>—it was deemed advisable that “a brake should be put on recruiting”, and the standard of physique was raised. This measure had the immediate effect of reducing the stream; so much indeed that when organization had been introduced although the restrictions with regard to physique were removed on 11th October, it became necessary to adopt special measures to stimulate recruiting. A Parliamentary Recruiting Committee was then established to promote enlistment by speeches and other devices of publicity. For recruiting purposes the United Kingdom was divided up into areas, roughly corresponding with the counties, the large towns being treated separately. Each recruiting area fed a corresponding infantry regiment, whilst recruits for cavalry, artillery, engineers and other corps were despatched to their respective depots.

On the very day that Lord Kitchener called for “the First Hundred Thousand” came offers of assistance from the Dominions overseas. The War Office accepted con-

<sup>1</sup> Between August 1914 and 31st May 1915 over 20,000 gentlemen were gazetted to temporary Regular commissions for the period of the war, some without any training—a system which ceased in January 1915—others after receiving a month's training at training schools, 33 of which were formed. The courses of instruction at the Royal Military College and Royal Military Academy were reduced to an average of four and six months respectively; their establishments were increased and the fees abolished in order to increase their output. Two hundred University candidates were given commissions, and officers were transferred from Colonial corps. Roughly 37,000 gentlemen were granted commissions in the Regular Army and 16,000 in the Territorial Force.

<sup>2</sup> The million was reached on 23rd February 1915, and the million and a half on 3rd September 1915. Many of these men joined, at their own wish, units of the old Army.



tingents of 20,000 men from Canada, 20,000 from Australia and 8,000 from New Zealand, all of which were to be concentrated in the United Kingdom. August  
1914.

On the 9th August, the date on which the main British Expeditionary Force began crossing the Channel, the Special Reserve infantry and Territorial Force artillery garrisons for the defended ports in the United Kingdom were at their stations, and the coast protection forces and the units of the "Central Force"—which, according to pre-arranged plan, was later to be assembled under General Sir Ian Hamilton for the defence of the United Kingdom against invasion—began moving to their war stations. By the 18th the local forces were all in their allotted places and the concentration of the "Central Force", the strength of which was about two hundred thousand men and sixty thousand animals, was then taken in hand.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the altered political situation in Ireland, the two Territorial divisions detailed for service there remained in the Western Command.

The Territorial Force on the 4th August was some 5,700 officers and 150,000 men short of its establishment of 15,977 officers and 401,556 other ranks. The deficit was soon made up, and by the 3rd November, the earliest date for which statistics are available, the total number of "other ranks" was 493,876 men, more than 90,000 over establishment; and practically all the new men had undertaken the obligation to serve wherever they might be required. By the end of the year the original strength of the Territorial Force had been more than doubled.

On the 15th September the Government had called on

<sup>1</sup> It was organized as follows:—

Mounted Division . . .	Hqrs. Bury St. Edmunds: 4 Mounted Brigades.
First Army . . .	Hqrs. Aldershot: Highland Mounted Brigade, Highland Division.
Second Army . . .	Hqrs. Aldershot: 1st South West Mounted Brigade, South East Mounted Brigade, 1st London Division, Home Counties Division.
Third Army . . .	Hqrs. Luton: North Midland Mounted Brigade, 2nd South West Mounted Brigade, East Anglian Division, North Midland Division, South Midland Division, 2nd London Division.

the Territorial Force to volunteer for foreign service. Units of which not less than 60 per cent. volunteered were designated "General Service", and were ordered to recruit up to establishment and 25 per cent. beyond it. As soon as they reached the required figure, they were taken over by the War Office and ceased to be administered by the County Associations, except as regards the provision of reinforcements, arrangements for issue of allotments for dependants and other work of the Territorial Force record offices. Practically all units found the necessary percentage of volunteers to qualify them for general service, and those that could not immediately do so soon attained the numbers laid down. It was not, in fact, until the autumn of 1915 that special recruiting efforts had to be made for the Territorial Force. It was easy, therefore, to proceed to expansion. As soon as a unit had a sufficiently high percentage of volunteers for service overseas, steps were taken towards duplicating it, and a second unit of equivalent establishment was thus formed—"Second Line unit" as it was called—for each original unit. Hence arose later the fractional nomenclature of the "2/4th Battalion" and later of the "3/4th", to signify that the units in question—originally called Home Service or Reserve Battalions—were the 2nd and 3rd Lines of a 4th Battalion.

Thus, at the end of the initial stage, the Territorial Force consisted of

1. First Line, composed entirely of General Service men.
2. Second Line, composed partly of General Service men, and partly of Home Service men transferred from the First Line.
3. Small Depots, which received, clothed and posted recruits.

It was inevitable that the Territorial divisions should compete with the New Armies in attracting men; but, at Lord Kitchener's request, County Associations subordinated the interests of the Territorials to the rival force, and some of their members even undertook the responsibility of raising units for it. It must in fairness be pointed out that at first the efforts of the Associations were seriously handicapped, and the expansion of the Territorial Force considerably delayed, by the fact that the War Office had naturally a preferential call on the resources of the country. The Associations found their usual contractors unable, even forbidden, to accept orders for clothing, boots and other necessaries; moreover, each Association was competing in

the market with all the others. Nor was it possible for the War Office, in the early days of the war, to supply what was required by the Territorials, although, according to pre-war regulations, the Associations had no duties whatever to perform, after mobilization, in regard to issues of clothing and equipment. The difficulty was largely solved by getting into touch with the smaller manufacturers.

Besides these administrative troubles, there was a lack in the Territorial Force, as in the New Armies, of officers and qualified instructors; in fact, many Regular instructors were withdrawn from the Territorial Force to assist in raising New Army units. Consequently the Associations decided not to push on hastily with recruiting for new units, but to form them gradually as instructors, clothing, arms and equipment became available. The waste of time and the discouragement occasioned by the collection of large numbers of men who could not be cared for was thus avoided.

The expansion of the Territorial Force included the raising of a number of additional divisional units which had no existence in peace time. These included ammunition columns and parks, cyclist companies, and sufficient engineer field companies to increase the establishment from two to three per division. At the same time, there was a drain on the Force to provide complete formations and units to relieve Regular troops in foreign garrisons, to reinforce the British Expeditionary Force, and to assist in finding officers for the New Armies. Thus, on the 4th September 1914, the 7th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment sailed for Gibraltar, followed on the 10th by the 8th Battalion. The 1st Brigade of the 1st London Division left, also on the 4th, for Malta; and between this date and the 10th the East Lancashire Division—later known as the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, the first Territorial division to leave the United Kingdom as a complete formation<sup>1</sup>—embarked for Egypt.<sup>2</sup> During 1914 twenty-two Territorial Force battalions went to the Western Front.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was short only of seven batteries.

<sup>2</sup> The order of leaving was:

1st East Lancashire (42nd) Division	. Sept. 1914	Egypt
1st Wessex (43rd) Division	. Oct. 1914	India
1st Home Counties (44th) Division	. Oct. 1914	„
2nd Wessex (45th) Division	. Dec. 1914	„

The first unit to leave for the theatre of war was the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars (Yeomanry). See Vol. I. p. 403.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix No. 4.



By the end of September, however, there were available for Home Defence, thirteen Mounted Brigades (T.F.) and thirteen Territorial divisions (including two warned for India); sufficient men had been recruited to form twelve New Army divisions; and the 7th and 8th Regular Divisions were in process of formation, the 7th nearly ready, organized from Regular troops that had been relieved and were arriving home from the Mediterranean, Egypt, Bermuda, South Africa and India.<sup>1</sup>

Mention has already been made<sup>2</sup> that during 1913-14 the Government of India had been consulted as to the extent to which Indian troops could co-operate in the event of a war between Great Britain and a European enemy, and two—possibly three—divisions and a cavalry brigade had been suggested as a contingent. Nothing, however, had been done towards earmarking any formations for the purpose or changing the organization of the Indian transport and mobilization equipment in order to conform to the standard of British divisions for a European campaign. On the 5th August, after the meeting of the Naval and Military Council at which the Prime Minister presided,<sup>3</sup> it was proposed to the Government of India that they should furnish as soon as possible a division to reinforce the garrison of Egypt, with the ultimate purpose of its employment in Europe, and next day the assistance suggested was increased to two divisions and a cavalry brigade. To these proposals the Government of India agreed, and, at the same time, informed the British Government that all the Ruling Princes had offered the services of their troops. The latter, it may be said, were subsequently allocated to the various Indian Expeditionary Forces.

The 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Divisions—called simply the Lahore and Meerut Divisions, to avoid confusion with the British formations—and the Secunderabad

<sup>1</sup> The gradual rise in strength of the Expeditionary Force in France provides some index of the efforts made to improvise armies. The figures at various dates were:—

15th September 1914 (Battle of the Aisne)	. . .	163,897
15th November 1914 (after Battles of Ypres)	. . .	224,647
26th December 1914	. . . . .	245,197
31st January 1915	. . . . .	347,384

And at the end of May it was 601,000, apart from 125,000 in the Dardanelles force, and the grand total of troops in England in various stages of training to go abroad and doing garrison duty was 1,500,000.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume I. pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> See Volume I. p. 29.

Cavalry Brigade were selected for Egypt. Lieutenant-General Sir James Willcocks was appointed to command the force, which was known as Indian Expeditionary Force "A", and later, in France, as the Indian Corps. The Lahore Division embarked between the 24th and 29th August, but, owing to neither transports nor escort being available, the despatch of the remainder of the force was delayed until the 20th September. On the 27th August the British Government decided to use Indian troops in Europe, and on the 28th instructions were sent that the whole Expeditionary Force "A"—which was now to include a cavalry division of five brigades, subsequently increased to two divisions of three brigades each—should be sent on to Marseilles, where its story will be taken up later.

Aug.-  
Oct.  
1914.

Arrangements were also made in India for the despatch of Indian troops to East Africa, and, later on, to Mesopotamia; and to provide others in lieu of the force originally detailed for Egypt. No operations were at this time contemplated in that country or in Mesopotamia, for it was not until 1st November that there was a state of war between Great Britain and Turkey.

The Government of Canada had, as already mentioned, offered 20,000 men for Europe. They also undertook to garrison Bermuda at once, and on the 11th September sent the Royal Canadian Regiment to relieve the 2/Lincolnshire Regiment there. On the 3rd October the Canadian Expeditionary Force sailed for the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Its strength was 30,500 of all ranks and 7,300 horses, and on its arrival Major-General E. A. H. Alderson assumed command. The numbers constituted more than the establishment of a division, and on the 31st Lord Kitchener proposed that a second division should be organized, beginning as a nucleus with the balance of the Canadian troops then in England. He invited the Canadian Government to raise the remainder of the troops required, viz., two infantry brigades, three artillery brigades and certain departmental units.

Similarly as regards Australia and New Zealand, the numbers of troops sent exceeded the contingents originally promised. Besides making arrangements for certain minor expeditions which will be mentioned later on in the chapter, the Commonwealth Government despatched between the 17th and 22nd October—after a delay due to the diffi-

<sup>1</sup> The convoy was joined at Cape Race by a transport bearing the Newfoundland Regiment, 525 strong.

culty of obtaining sufficient naval escort—the Australian Imperial Force, 30,376 strong, under the command of Major-General W. T. Bridges. In the same convoy sailed the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, 8,459 strong, with Major-General Sir A. Godley in command.

Throughout the Empire overseas the naval ports were put in a state of defence, and all precautions taken, involving such details as sending an infantry company from the Cape to do duty at St. Helena. A small contingent of the British troops then in North China was despatched to co-operate with the Japanese against Tsingtao.<sup>1</sup>

### THE CONTROL OF WAR POLICY

The advisory status, under the Cabinet, of the Committee of Imperial Defence has been mentioned, and how after declaration of war, on the 5th and 6th August 1914, a council of war, consisting of the principal Ministers and leading members of the Staffs of the Navy and Army, had been assembled to discuss the strength of the Expeditionary Force, the bringing home of garrisons overseas, and assistance from the Indian Army.<sup>2</sup> The supreme direction of war, however, remained always with the Cabinet, and for the next three and a half months, until the 25th November 1914, was exercised directly by the Cabinet. On that date a War Council was formed, mainly for the purpose of curtailing the number of the members of the Cabinet who personally participated in the conduct of the war. This Council was, like the Committee of Imperial Defence, a committee of the Cabinet with some experts added, and practically a development of the old peace-time Committee. Acting under Cabinet direction, keeping the Cabinet informed, and consulting the Cabinet before the development of any new policy, it investigated, discussed, decided and took action on matters referred to it, the Cabinet always being ultimately responsible for policy.

For four months, from the 7th June to the 30th October 1915—the Coalition Government having been formed on the 25th May,—this Council met, without change of functions, as the “Dardanelles Committee”, as its deliberations were chiefly in reference to the Gallipoli campaign.

In October 1915, the name of the Council was again

<sup>1</sup> The 2/South Wales Borderers, followed by half of the 36th Sikhs.

<sup>2</sup> Volume I. pp. 13-14 and pp. 28-29.



changed, this time to the " War Committee of the Cabinet " ; but though its permanent membership was slightly reduced, there was again no alteration in its duties.

On the 9th December 1916, after Mr. Lloyd George had become Prime Minister, the Committee was renamed the " War Cabinet " and still further reduced in numbers. It now consisted of the Prime Minister and a limited number of members, theoretically freed from all administrative duties.<sup>1</sup> The War Cabinet continued in control of the supreme direction of the war until the armistice, although in 1917 two committees were brought into being. One, called the Imperial War Committee, admitted of the Overseas Dominions being represented ; the other, the " War Policy Committee " , formed of members of the War Cabinet, investigated the questions involved in the subject which its title specifies.

The representatives of the Naval and General Staffs and other experts were called upon by the War Cabinet for advice and explanation as seemed necessary, and the First Sea Lord and Chief of the Imperial General Staff attended its meetings regularly. Throughout the changes in the name of the Council, Sir Maurice Hankey remained its Secretary, and its Secretariat was that of the Committee of Imperial Defence, increased as occasion demanded.

## MUNITIONS

In the plans and preparations of the General Staffs of the French and German Armies in the years preceding the outbreak of war there is the clearest evidence of the unanimous belief that a European conflict would be of short duration. General von Moltke, the Chief of the German General Staff, considered that one great battle would decide the issue ;<sup>2</sup> and, so confident were the French of a rapid decision, that in the matter of armament they had only made arrangements for repairing existing material, believing that there would be no time for the construction of new weapons.<sup>3</sup>

In the British General Staff it was assumed that only

<sup>1</sup> The original members were Earl Curzon, Viscount Milner, Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Arthur Henderson.

<sup>2</sup> Tappen, " Bis zur Marne " , p. 8. The author was head of the German G.S. Operations Section.

<sup>3</sup> Baquet, " Souvenirs d'un directeur d'artillerie " , p. 45. The author was selected in November 1914 to organize the supply of guns and ammunition at the French Ministry of War.



the Expeditionary Force would be permitted to embark for the Continent, and it was considered that provision should be made for four great battles in the first two months of war, each lasting three days. The organization of the supply of the fighting troops was arranged in accordance with this scale.

The provision of munitions was vested in the Department of the Master-General of the Ordnance, the fourth Military member of the Army Council ; but the Department of the Finance Member was responsible for ascertaining where the requirements of the Master-General of the Ordnance could be met and for the actual placing of the orders with contractors, who had to be approved by the Master-General's Department. After the outbreak of war, however, the last-named undertook the placing of many contracts direct.

Under the supervision of the Master-General of the Ordnance were the Government armament factories, which comprised the Royal Ordnance Factories at Woolwich, the Royal Gunpowder Factory at Waltham Abbey and the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield Lock. After the South African War the policy had been to maintain a reserve of machinery and plant in these establishments, but their personnel had been reduced to about half the number of men required to keep going all the machinery required for a normal day's war output for the Expeditionary Force.<sup>1</sup> In view of the general policy of successive Governments and the gradual reduction of Army Estimates, no arrangements had been made for a larger force than six divisions fighting on the Continent, and by October there were nine divisions on the Western Front. Neither was there available an adequate reserve supply of arms and munitions to equip fully the authorized Territorial Force ; for instance, of the 400,000 rifles required only 240,000 had been delivered by mid-December 1914.

The supplies of ammunition were based on the findings of a Committee appointed by the War Office in 1901, towards the close of the South African War, under the chairmanship of Sir Francis Mowatt. The proposals of this Committee, most of which were accepted and given effect to in 1904, were made on the assumption that it was required to maintain a force of three army corps (six

<sup>1</sup> Estimated at 16,000 men for Woolwich Arsenal, where 8,500 men were actually employed in peace time.

divisions) and a cavalry division in the field during a campaign similar to that in South Africa, and they had no particular reference to a Continental campaign. In spite of the fact that in 1908 the British artillery was re-armed with a quick-firing gun, the scale of gun ammunition laid down by the Mowatt Committee was not altered. It was not that the matter was overlooked, for in 1912, on the initiative of the General Staff, the scale of small-arm ammunition was increased to meet the eventuality of a European war; but there seems to have been disinclination on all sides to face the expenditure involved by the increase of gun ammunition and of the additional transport required to carry it.

The reserve supply of gun ammunition maintained in the United Kingdom, and the estimated capacity of the Ordnance factories at the outbreak of war, were as follows:—

	Reserves. <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Manufacturing Capacity.
13-pdr.	1,900 rounds per gun ( 30 guns) = 57,000	10,000 rounds a month.
18-pdr.	1,500 " " " (324 " ) = 486,000	10,000 " "
4·5-inch how.	1,200 " " " (108 " ) = 129,600	10,000 " "
60-pdr.	1,000 " " " ( 24 " ) = 24,000	100 " "

The Mowatt report also contained a proviso that at the end of the first six months there should be available 500 additional rounds for each 13-pdr., 18-pdr. and 60-pdr., and 400 for each 4·5-inch howitzer. The allowance for six months worked out for the 18-pdr. field gun at about ten rounds per gun per day, whereas the experience of the war showed that during the periods of continuous fighting, fifty should be allowed for.<sup>2</sup> It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the story of our gun ammunition supply in the first year of the war is a depressing one, and that the expenditure constantly outran the receipts from the United Kingdom. In some days during the Battles of Ypres, 1914, the artillery, as will be seen, was limited to an average of four rounds per gun per day. This did not prevent particular batteries firing many more on critical occasions. In times of stress the average expenditure rose to as much as 80 rounds per gun per day in the artillery engaged, and as many as 1,200 were fired by individual batteries in twenty-four hours.

<sup>1</sup> That is, available. Of the 1,500 for each 18-pdr., for example, 528 went to France with the divisions, 472 with the Ordnance on the L. of C. and 500 remained in England. The French total reserve per field gun was only 1,300 (Mermicx, "Au sein des commissions", p. 398).

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the battle of the Somme 1916 each 18-pdr. had 1,000 rounds stored at the gun position before the opening of the preliminary bombardment.

This could only be accomplished by careful husbanding of ammunition, and by refraining from retaliation to the daily harassing fire of the enemy, and this undoubtedly affected the morale of our troops.

When Lord Kitchener took up his appointment as Minister of War, he did not conceal his dissatisfaction with the preparations that had been made. His conception of a war with Germany was very different to anything that the General Staff had been permitted to contemplate. The Ordnance factories, which were at once brought up to establishment and ordered to work up to their maximum output as rapidly as possible, might have sufficed for the Expeditionary Force ; but they were obviously inadequate to meet the expansion of the Army contemplated by Lord Kitchener, and actually commenced within a few days of the outbreak of war.

The only sources of immediate munition supply outside the national factories were the private armament firms in the United Kingdom. Now, the work of these in peace time, as regards armament, had been confined almost entirely to orders placed by the British and foreign navies, and, as it was essential to keep our sea communications open, the Admiralty continued to have first call on our engineering industries. Naval needs demanded not only munitions, but ships and an endless variety of novel instruments for naval warfare devised to cope with submarines and facilitate mine laying and mine sweeping.<sup>1</sup> Thus when the armament firms were approached by the War Office in August 1914, they were fully employed on work for the Navy and had little or no plant or skilled labour for any considerable output for military purposes. To deal with the Master-General's orders they had practically to reorganize a large part of their works for a new industry. The same difficulty applied to private firms capable of manufacturing rifles and small-arm ammunition. For instance, in August 1914, the Birmingham Small Arms Company was manufacturing for the War Office only 135 rifles a week ; and some years before had been compelled, from lack of orders, to turn its attention to other work such as motors, bicycles and sporting guns. Similarly although there were seven or eight well-known private firms capable

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co., for instance, during the war built 12 armoured ships, 11 cruisers, 8 sloops, 11 submarines, 4 "mystery" ships, besides floating power stations and train ferries, particularly the Richborough cross-channel ferry.



of manufacturing service explosives, orders for such munitions had never been placed outside the Government Factory at Waltham Abbey.

There were, in addition to the home resources, the engineering industries of the British nation overseas. These, however, had been created for local purposes only, their assistance had not been reckoned on, and several months had necessarily to elapse before any substantial output could be derived from them.<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen, therefore, that the sources of immediate supply were extremely limited, and there was no reserve of arms or munitions for a European war.

On the 10th August contracts were placed for equipping and arming the first six divisions of the New Army, supplementary to the established requirements of the Expeditionary Force. The contracts were not, however, dealt with in the usual manner. The War Office staff, whose strength was calculated for the administration of a small army and whose efficiency had been affected by the departure of officers on active service and of officials to take up duty overseas, was wholly inadequate to grapple with them in detail. The contracts were therefore divided between the Government Ordnance Factories and seven recognized armament firms, and these let sub-contracts to smaller firms for quantities which exceeded the output capacity of their own establishments. In this manner, the expansion of production was left to a great extent to the personal initiative of the Superintendent of the Ordnance Factories and to the directors of the great armament firms.

The experience of the first weeks of the campaign on the Western Front, disclosing as it did the magnitude of the expenditure and loss of material in modern warfare, proved the inadequacy of such arrangements, and on the 17th September, when men were still pouring into the recruiting offices, Lord Kitchener told the House of Lords that "our chief difficulty is one of material rather

<sup>1</sup> The six Ordnance factories in India were intended solely to meet the needs of the Indian Army, and relied on the United Kingdom for most of their machinery and material. The Australian Government possessed a cordite factory and a small arms factory, and the Colonial Ammunition Company at Melbourne manufactured small-arm ammunition. The resources of Canada were more extensive; in 1914, steel ingots and castings were being produced at the rate of 700,000 tons a year, and new factories were in process of construction. By the end of 1914 fifty Canadian private firms were engaged in making shell.

than of personnel".<sup>1</sup> Further, he did not consider satisfactory the dates given for deliveries to the New Armies, and on the 30th September, at his request, the Cabinet decided that the various firms supplying munitions should be requested to increase their plant, so as to enable them to carry out large orders in addition to those already placed by the War Office. It was agreed to put twenty millions sterling at the disposal of the trade for this purpose.

Twelve days later, a Cabinet Committee on Munitions was formed. It was composed of the Secretary of State for War, the Lord Chancellor (Lord Haldane), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd George), the First Lord of the Admiralty (Mr. Winston Churchill), the Home Secretary (Mr. McKenna), and the Presidents of the Boards of Trade and Agriculture (Mr. Runciman and Lord Lucas). At its meetings on the 12th, 13th, 20th, 21st and 23rd October, the whole question of the supply of munitions of war for the Army on the Western Front, and for the forces in training at home, was considered on the now accepted assumption that the war would be a protracted one.

The result of these five Cabinet Committee meetings was that sanction was given for the expenditure of large sums of money on the expansion of munitions factories and the placing of greatly increased contracts with the armament firms both at home and in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

One matter of importance not dealt with was the supply of labour for the munitions firms. This was discussed at a sixth meeting held, two months later, on 23rd December.

<sup>1</sup> On the 16th December, 1914, instead of the authorized establishment of 1,000 rounds of 18-pdr. ammunition in France, there were only 648, and instead of 800 rounds of 4.5-inch howitzer ammunition, only 260. The required output per day as estimated by Sir John French, and the receipts from England during December 1914, are given in the table below, and show how far short the latter were of his needs :—

	<i>Required per gun.</i>	<i>Received in December.</i>
18-pdr. . . . .	50 (25 H.E.)	0.84
18-pdr. . . . .	50 (25 H.E.)	6.0 (0.24 H.E.)
4.5-inch how. . . . .	40 (35 H.E.)	4.6 (2.2 H.E.)
60-pdr. . . . .	25 (15 H.E.)	none
6-inch how. . . . .	25 (all H.E.)	4.6 (all H.E.)
4.7-inch gun . . . . .	25 (15 H.E.)	7.6 (4 H.E.)
6-inch gun . . . . .	25 (all H.E.)	6.3 (0.4 H.E.)
9.2-inch how. . . . .	12 (all H.E.)	5.8 (all H.E.)

The supply of ammunition for 18-pdrs. was complicated by the factor that at the outbreak of war these guns had no H.E. shell. The first 1,000 rounds of 18-pdr. H.E. "for trial and report" were sent to France only on 19th October 1914.

<sup>2</sup> For further details see Note at the end of the chapter.

The unrestricted enlistment of skilled workmen, in spite of Lord Kitchener's statement on 8th September that such men were doing their duty by remaining at their trades, had begun to disorganize the armament firms, and reduced the output to half of what had been anticipated. The firms could not even proceed to the execution of the extension of their works from lack of men of the building trades.<sup>1</sup> The remedial measures—the issue of a badge and certificate to men retained, the endeavour to get skilled men back from the army, and the diversion of skilled labour from commercial to munitions work—were only begun in the early months of 1915, and belong to the story of that year.

Nevertheless, the foundations of the great organization, which, in the later years of the war, was to give the Armies not only a sufficient but an almost embarrassing supply of munitions may be said to have been well and truly laid; for the conversion and expansion of the factories to meet the early contracts built up machinery which only required willing hands and an assured supply of raw material to meet all demands made upon it.

#### THE HOUSING, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY OF THE ARMY AND NEW ARMIES

Mention has been made of the lack at the outset of accommodation, equipment and clothing for the men of the New Armies and for the new units of the Territorial Force. These temporary difficulties were soon overcome; but, in an appreciation of the task of the military authorities, the situation as it was in August 1914 and the measures immediately taken to cope with the new demands deserve notice. Only a few of the principal items can be touched on here.

The accommodation in barracks at the time of mobilization was sufficient for 174,800 single men; it was increased to 262,000 by clearing out the families of soldiers from the married quarters and using every accessory building that could be made available. Even this development provided

<sup>1</sup> 10,000 skilled engineers had enlisted by 1st January 1915; 16 per cent. of the one and a half million skilled and unskilled men engaged in the metal industries, and 178,000 men of the building trades, out of 920,000 employed in July 1914, enlisted in the first year of the war. According to a statement made 16.5.24 in the House of Commons by Mr. Smillie, in 1915 out of 999,474 mine workers of all ages 191,000 volunteered to go to the war.



only for a small portion of the total increment of recruits, and though large numbers were placed under canvas and others housed in schools, institutions and specially hired buildings, the majority had to be billeted on the population, as many as 800,000 men being quartered in this way at one time. In the course of time as camps and hutments became ready, billeting was reduced to a minimum.

The war reserves of clothing at the outbreak of war served for little more than the fitting out and the upkeep, for a few weeks, of the original Expeditionary Force. During normal times the manufacture of army clothing had been practically confined to a few firms. Large expansion could only be brought about gradually, and before clothing could be made the materials had to be procured. Trivial as it may appear—it is an example of the difficulties that cropped up—the trade was unable to meet the sudden call for buttons. During the first rush of recruits, khaki was unprocurable. A supply of 500,000 suits of blue serge uniform was obtained at the rate of 10,000 suits a day, and some four or five hundred thousand greatcoats of civilian pattern were purchased from “ready-made” stocks. The leading clothing firms, under War Office contracts, organized the small ones throughout the country; but at first only blue and grey material was available, quantities of the former being obtained from the Post Office stocks. Ready-made clothing was also purchased in the United States and Canada, and, as a temporary measure, half a sovereign was paid to each recruit who came up with a greatcoat, boots, and a good suit of clothes. These he was required to wear until uniform became available.

The number of boots required annually for the Army before the war had been about 250,000 pairs, produced by about twenty-five firms. The task of organizing the resources of the country and of inducing other manufacturers to turn out the regulation pattern boot was placed in the hands of a civilian expert.

In the official “Vocabulary of Stores” there were listed some thirty thousand articles, including such various items as saddles, water-bottles, mess-tins, blankets, picks, barbed wire, sandbags, clothes pegs and drawing pins. The normal peace supply of most of these was obtained from a small number of firms; the standard “web equipment” for infantry was manufactured by two firms only. Here again there was a shortage of material; for instance, the



flax thread for saddlery could not be obtained from the usual source, Belgium; but demands were gradually met by organization of home industries and by purchase in Canada and the United States.

The provision of supplies—that is, rations for man and horse, fuel and lighting materials—was centralized, and organized by the establishment of large magazines, in places selected with a view to shipment for the forces abroad. The supplies themselves, to prevent complications, were obtained through the Director of Contracts at the War Office. Meat was brought from as far afield as Patagonia, and the Allied Governments made contracts for a regular supply with the principal frozen meat companies of the world; whilst for petrol the War Office had a lien on the stocks of certain companies in the United Kingdom.

The requirements in horses had been calculated on the assumption that the whole of the Expeditionary Force and the whole of the Territorial Force would be mobilized, and that an initial three months' supply to replace casualties would be necessary. This made a total of 165,000 horses, and the peace establishment was 25,000, with a registered and subsidized reserve of another 25,000. The remaining 115,000 were obtained by impressment under a decentralized scheme. Remount commissions—to operate both in the United Kingdom and North America—for the purpose of maintaining the Army establishments, had been arranged for, and the expansion of the Army was dealt with by increasing the number of the horse-purchasing commissions sent abroad.

Only eighty mechanical transport vehicles were in the possession of the military authorities at the outbreak of the war; but the balance was provided by the Subsidy Scheme, under which vehicles were registered,<sup>1</sup> and by impressment carried out by the personnel of the Subsidy Scheme staff. By these means all vehicles required by the original Expeditionary Force were obtained within nine days. In order to meet the demand for transport for the New Armies, steps were at once taken to control and increase the output of the manufactories in the United Kingdom. The country was divided into areas under inspectors and the makers were restricted to one or two definite types of vehicle.

<sup>1</sup> See Volume I. p. 6.

## EXPEDITIONS AGAINST THE GERMAN COLONIES

On the 5th August the Prime Minister had approved of the formation, as a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, of a "Joint Naval and Military Committee for the Consideration of Combined Operations in Foreign Territory".<sup>1</sup> This Sub-Committee sat on the 5th August and held twelve meetings, the last being on 6th November. It arrived at conclusions with regard to operations against all the enemy colonial possessions except Tsingtao, which was not considered.

*German East Africa.*—The Sub-Committee recommended that an expedition should be sent from India against Dar es Salaam, the principal town and port of German East Africa, on the grounds that the capture of this base of the German naval forces off the coast of East Africa would facilitate the Admiralty arrangements for the protection of commerce, and that an offensive there would be the best protection for the neighbouring British possessions. This recommendation was approved next day by the Cabinet.

There were under eight hundred men of the King's African Rifles, without artillery, available for the defence of British East Africa. These were at once supplemented by the raising of local volunteer forces of about a thousand men, but the 29th Punjabis reached Mombasa from India on 1st September in time to defeat on 6th September a German force evidently sent to destroy the railway bridge at Tsavo. They were followed on 3rd October by 16 companies of Imperial Service Infantry, a machine-gun company and two batteries, and on the 30th by the 27th (Bangalore) Infantry Brigade, a composite brigade and another battery. An attempt to take Tanga on the 3rd November by a combined naval and military operation was a failure owing to the Germans having warning of the intended landing. An advance on land from British East Africa against Moschi, at the foot of Kilimanjaro, made at the same time, also led to no success. The British were thrown on the defensive, and the enemy was able to make raids,

<sup>1</sup> This Sub-Committee, known as "The Offensive Sub-Committee", consisted of Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, who presided at every meeting, General Sir Edward Barrow (India Office), Sir George Fiddes (Colonial Office), Major-General C. E. Callwell (War Office), Colonel Sir George Aston (Admiralty), Br.-General C. M. Dobell, Inspector-General of the West African Frontier Force, and others, with Major S. H. Wilson, R.E., Assistant Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, as Secretary.

fortunately abortive, into the countries bordering on German East Africa. Towards the end of November the control of operations in East Africa was transferred from the Government of India to the War Office; but it was not until the end of 1915, when all the other German colonies had been subjugated, that the conquest of East Africa was taken in hand. The strength of the enemy to be dealt with was 2,309 Europeans and 11,621 armed natives and at least an equal number of non-combatants, with 72 guns and 96 machine guns.

*German South West Africa.*—On the 4th August, 1914, on mobilization being ordered, the Government of the Union of South Africa, of which General Louis Botha was then Premier, offered the services of the Defence Force to relieve the garrison of Regular troops in South Africa. The garrison at the time was composed of two cavalry regiments, three batteries of field artillery, two companies of garrison artillery, three companies of engineers, five infantry battalions and a proportion of other corps. General Botha's offer was accepted on the 6th.<sup>1</sup>

On the 5th August the "Offensive Sub-Committee" of the Committee of Imperial Defence pointed out to the Government that strategical and political advantages would be gained by the capture of German South West Africa and the destruction of the German wireless stations there, and they attached great importance to the political effect of inviting the co-operation of the Union Government. The Admiralty, regarding the seizure of the coast wireless stations at Swakopmund and Lüderitz Bay as an urgent necessity, put the case more strongly and suggested that this operation could only be effected within a reasonable time by sending a joint naval and military expedition up the coast. To reach the wireless station at Windhoek, 200 miles inland, would involve a more serious expedition which could be undertaken afterwards.

The Union Government, to whom, in conjunction with the Senior Naval Officer on the Cape Station, all arrangements for the expedition were deputed, began preparations at once. After taking steps to protect the frontier of the Union, it was decided to send first 1,600 men and, later, 5,000 men to Swakopmund and Lüderitz Bay, provided naval escort could be found.

On the 21st August the Germans commenced hostilities

<sup>1</sup> The troops released formed a substantial portion of the 3rd Cavalry Division and 7th Division.



by crossing the frontier of the Union and occupying a position inside it near Nakab. When, however, on the 9th September General Botha announced in the House of Assembly that it was the intention, in accordance with the wishes of the Imperial Government, to invade German South West Africa, the proposal did not meet with universal approval. Malcontents, at the head of whom was General Beyers—Commandant-General of the Union Force, a man of German blood, who had visited Germany in 1912—had already been planning a rising against the Government with the knowledge and support of the Governor of German South West Africa. Only a small armed revolt actually took place; it met with no success against the Union forces; and had entirely collapsed by December 1914.

Whilst these events were taking place, on the 15th September, the Lüderitz Bay expedition, under Colonel P. S. Beves,<sup>1</sup> had sailed. It occupied the place on the 19th without opposition; but the rebellion then brought operations practically to a standstill, and nothing of importance was attempted before January 1915, by which time internal troubles were entirely over.

*Togoland.*—On the 5th August the "Offensive Subcommittee" recommended, and next day the Cabinet approved, that operations should be undertaken against Togoland, a strip of territory lying between French Dahomey on the east and the Gold Coast Colony on the west. The objective was the wireless station at Kamina. This station lay almost exactly one hundred miles from the coast and was the centre point of the German telegraphic communications in Africa.<sup>2</sup>

The authorities in the Gold Coast Colony acted on their instructions from home with great promptitude. On 26th August 1914, within a fortnight of the beginning of operations and three weeks after declaration of war, the German Governor surrendered Togoland unconditionally to Captain (Temporary Lieut.-Colonel) Bryant and a force of the Gold Coast Regiment and Tirailleurs Sénégalais of under seven hundred men.

<sup>1</sup> Late Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He held the appointment of Commandant of Cadets, Union of South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> It was powerful enough to transmit to Nauen, near Berlin, and was connected by two routes to Monrovia in Liberia—whence three German-owned cables ran to Pernambuco in South America. The first route was direct wireless, the second wireless to Duala in the Cameroons, from which place there was a cable to Liberia. This cable, however, was soon cut by the British.

*The Cameroons.*—This German possession lying with Nigeria on its western frontier, and the French Congo and the French Sudan on its remaining sides, presented a difficult problem. Its average dimensions were about five hundred miles from north to south and east to west, equal to the maximum length and breadth of the German Empire, and although the Germans were believed to have a native force of only two thousand men, it was obvious that offensive operations against the Colony would be a more formidable undertaking than in the case of Togoland, and to carry them out reinforcements for the British troops in Nigeria would be required. The "Offensive Sub-Committee" at its meeting on 5th August decided to postpone immediate action. The French Government and the Departments of State concerned were consulted, and on 17th August Br.-General C. M. Dobell, the Inspector-General of the West African Frontier Force, who had been appointed to command the expedition, laid before the Committee a scheme for the capture of Duala (the seat of Government and an excellent port) in co-operation with the Navy. This entailed a force of about two thousand men and ten guns, drawn from Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. The French Government having previously agreed to organize a similar force, General Dobell's scheme was approved and he left for Sierra Leone. Picking up his force en route, he reached the estuary of the Cameroon river on the 23rd September. On the 27th, thanks chiefly to the co-operation of the Navy and the Nigerian Marine, Duala, twenty miles upstream, a large and complete base, fell into the hands of the Allies, with large booty, including 30,000 tons of shipping.

On the 29th September, other attempts to enter the Cameroons from the north and north-west having miscarried, the "Offensive Sub-Committee" recommended that General Dobell should be informed that the ultimate object of the military operations was the complete reduction of the German Colony. Considerable reinforcements were found to be necessary, and it was not until 18th February 1916 that, with the assistance of French columns which operated from the south, the conquest was finally effected.

*The Pacific.*—On the advice of the "Offensive Sub-Committee", the Imperial Government on the 6th August requested the Commonwealth Government to send a force to seize the German wireless stations in New Guinea and



New Britain and on Yap and Nauru Islands; and also asked the New Zealand Government to act similarly as regards Samoa.

On the 15th August the New Zealand expedition of about 1,400 men sailed from Wellington for Samoa, and on the 29th August the surrender of Apia was received.

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining a naval escort, the Australian expedition of 1,600 men for New Guinea was not concentrated at Port Moresby until the 27th August. On the 9th September it reached Rossel Lagoon, and, on the 11th, Herbertshöhe (Kokopo) and the wireless station were captured without opposition. On the 13th Rabaul, the seat of Government, was taken, and on the 17th the unconditional surrender was received of German New Guinea—that is of all the German possessions administered from Rabaul.

On the 17th October a small Australian force from New Guinea occupied the German island of Kaewieng, and on the 6th November took possession of Nauru. As the Japanese had seized the Peters, Caroline and Marshall Islands, all the German Pacific possessions were now accounted for.<sup>1</sup>

It will be noticed that in the conduct of these minor expeditions, in spite of their far-reaching results, very few troops had been employed. They had furthermore been drawn entirely from local forces or from India, and were not available for, or at any rate required at the time in Europe. The very important precept of strategy enunciated in the phrase "Make your detachments as small as possible", that is, do not use a single man more than is absolutely necessary outside the decisive theatre of war, was fully observed.

Except for the very limited rising in South Africa, events completely falsified the calculations of the German General Staff, that, in the case of a European war in which Great Britain was involved and the Expeditionary Force employed on the Continent, there would be rebellion throughout her overseas dominions and particularly in India.<sup>2</sup> Although the outbreak of war was seized on by revolutionary leaders in India to stimulate their followers to renewed exertions, the general attitude

<sup>1</sup> Yap wireless station had been destroyed by the Navy on the 12th August and Nauru station on the 12th September.

<sup>2</sup> Kuhl, "Der deutscher Generalstab" (first edition), pp. 88-89. The mutiny of an Indian battalion in Singapore did not take place until February 1915.

of the people remained loyal and generous, even when, in November, Turkey entered the ranks of Great Britain's enemies. This introduced for Muhammadans an apparently religious factor, but it was soon realized that the struggle was a war of nations and not of religions.

## NOTE

## CABINET COMMITTEE ON MUNITIONS

At the first meeting on 12th October the question of the supply of guns and gun ammunition was investigated. Contracts had already been placed, in accordance with the recommendations of a War Office Siege Committee, for 32 heavy (12-inch), 48 medium (9·2-inch), and 60 light (6-inch) howitzers. Pending the construction of these, eighty 6-inch howitzers of the old pattern, in addition to the twenty-four already despatched to the Western Front, and twenty 4·7-inch guns collected from stations overseas, one experimental 9·2-inch howitzer and one 9·2-inch gun were available and were sent to France<sup>1</sup> in October 1914.

The Master-General of the Ordnance (Major-General Sir S. von Donop) stated that 892 18-pdr. guns had been ordered, of which 864 would be ready by 15th June 1915, and would be sufficient for arming 24 new divisions with four-gun batteries. The Committee considered that 3,000 should be delivered by 1st May at latest, and summoned representatives of the Ordnance factories and of Messrs. Vickers, Armstrong and Beardmore and the Coventry Ordnance Company to attend its next meeting on the following day. It was assumed that if guns could be provided so also could all other accessories, shells, fuzes, explosives, etc., within a similar period.

At this second meeting, these representatives, on being assured of financial assistance, were able to give estimates of production exceeding those previously put forward and the Committee directed that contracts should be given out accordingly.

The War Office had already placed considerable orders for war material both in Canada and the United States, and Lord Kitchener had obtained for the British Empire and its Allies the output of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation for five years. The Committee determined to go further in taking advantage of the immense resources of the United States, and a telegram was despatched to an officer of the British Inspection staff, sent out there from Woolwich in September, directing him to "ascertain from all firms capable of making field guns and rifles to British specifications the maximum output they can deliver monthly from January to July up to a total of fifteen hundred field guns and half a million rifles". The first reply to the telegram was to the effect that no guns could be delivered until 1st September 1915. The Bethlehem Steel Corporation subsequently undertook to supply 200 18-pdr. guns by 1st July 1915.

At the third and fourth meetings the provision of propellants and

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. V.

rifles was considered. Measures were discussed for increasing the supply of cordite, which was wholly inadequate. Contracts had been placed for the delivery of 781,000 rifles by 1st July 1915 ; but the amount was deemed insufficient, and the Master-General of the Ordnance was asked to take steps to increase it by 400,000. As regards ammunition, no special decision was reached and further information was asked for.

At the fifth meeting of the Committee, it was decided to form an Armament Firms Committee, with power to distribute the various munitions orders to individual firms, each firm making its contract individually with the War Office, thus departing from the original plan of centralizing the contracts with the great firms. By the spring of 1915, the War Office was involved in contracts with 2,500 firms. It had, besides, to investigate the offers of persons of all descriptions, who came with promises, often vague, to produce prodigious quantities of arms and munitions at short notice.







## CHAPTER I

ANTWERP. 19TH SEPTEMBER TO 6TH OCTOBER 1914

(Maps 1, 3, 4, 5 ; Sketches 1, 2)

### THE GENERAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER 1914

THROUGHOUT the operations near Paris which culminated in the battle of the Marne, and in the pursuit which followed that battle, General Joffre had endeavoured to outflank and envelop the right, or western, wing of the German hosts. When the deadlock between the contending forces was reached in the middle of September, 1914, on the Aisne, he still sought for success by a continuation of the same manœuvre. As the Germans, on their part, also aimed at turning the open western flank of their enemies, the battle line had extended rapidly northward.<sup>1</sup> To obtain troops for this vital purpose, both belligerents had drawn forces from the eastern sectors of their fronts, which—except for a German success at St. Mihiel on 24th September—had become stabilized and strategically inactive. In their race northwards, however, the French and German divisions and corps on the threatened flank had arrived in a succession so nearly synchronous that neither side had been able to secure a strategical advantage. The western flank of the battle front, which on the 15th September was near Noyon (40 miles south-east of Amiens), by the 23rd/24th September had reached the Somme, five miles west of Péronne ; by the 27th/28th it was at Bapaume ; by the 1st October at Lens ; and, as we have seen, by the 8th October it was extended by the cavalry of both sides to the region Bailleul—Hazebrouck.

Whilst the two armies were thus extending northward in the effort to outflank each other, it was evident that a

<sup>1</sup> See Volume I. Chapter XVI. & Sketch 8.

Sept. suitable force—if it could be spared from the main action—thrown into the fray on the north in advance of the parallel fronts, might obtain the decision that mere extension of the front seemed unlikely to bring about. In any case, such an operation on the part of the foe was one that had to be foreseen and provided against.<sup>1</sup>

Early in September the British General Staff had suggested a movement from Dunkirk and Calais, and on the 16th September,<sup>2</sup> General Joffre, acting on this idea, asked that all available British troops might be sent to these ports to act against the enemy's communications.

Map 3.

Sketch 1.

In response to this request, a brigade of Royal Marine Light Infantry, and the Oxfordshire Hussars, with a detachment of Royal Engineers, had been despatched to Dunkirk, under Br.-General Sir George Aston, who had commanded the landing at Ostend in August. This Marine Brigade consisted largely of reservists of over twenty-one years' service,<sup>3</sup> with about seven hundred recruits of a few days' service who had never fired a rifle. Its commissioned ranks contained a large proportion of retired or newly joined officers.<sup>4</sup>

No other troops were at the time considered available: such few units of the Regular Army as were left or had arrived in the United Kingdom were awaiting mobilization equipment to enable them to take the field; the units of the Territorial Force and Yeomanry were being reconstituted so that they could be sent overseas; and the New Armies were only in the early stages of formation.

The tiny force now sent to Northern France was under the control of the Admiralty, and not under the command of Sir John French. But it was the intention of the British

<sup>1</sup> On the 31st August Moltke warned General Beseler, commanding before Antwerp, that there were signs that the Allies would attempt to raise the siege and attack the German communications. "Antwerpen" pp. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume I. p. 403. That the next German move would be the capture of Antwerp was suggested by the General Staff G.H.Q. France shortly after, on the 18th.

<sup>3</sup> One platoon, when the brigade went to Antwerp, is said to have consisted entirely of pensioner sergeants and colour-sergeants.

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Marine Brigade was not an improvisation, although it had been hurriedly raised on outbreak of war. It had its origin in a plan drafted some years before, at the instance of the Committee of Imperial Defence, for the formation on outbreak of war of a detachment of Royal Marines, to be called the Advanced Base Force. It was to consist of four battalions drawn from the Royal Marine Artillery and the three Royal Marine Light Infantry Divisions (depots), and was to be available to seize, fortify and protect any temporary naval base that might become necessary.

authorities, even at this date—should circumstances permit **Sept.**—to suggest the move of the whole of the British Army in France from the Aisne to the neighbourhood of Calais. Here, extricated from the midst of the French Armies in the centre of the front, where its line of communications was long and inconvenient, it would be in a position to operate close to home, with a flank on the coast, and supported by the Navy. Sir John considered that the plains of Flanders would afford his cavalry opportunities hitherto denied to it; and, in any case, on the coast, the B.E.F. would be at hand to co-operate in maintaining possession of Antwerp, should danger threaten that fortress. The project of the move to the left was discussed between the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir John French, during a visit of the former to G.H.Q. between the 26th and 28th September. General Joffre gave his consent to the movement.<sup>1</sup> In the correspondence on the subject which took place between him and Sir John French, Lille was mentioned as the concentration area of the British forces. The impending arrival of reinforcements in the shape of the 7th and 8th Divisions, then being organized, two Indian divisions and an Indian cavalry division, was advanced as one of the main reasons for asking that the British Expeditionary Force should return to its old place on the left of the line, where it would be a compact body, with increased strength. General Joffre himself had proposed that the reinforcing divisions from the United Kingdom should be disembarked in the neighbourhood of Dunkirk, and operate in the direction of Lille, and that the Indian contingent should be sent by rail from Marseilles to join them in the northern region. To concentrate the whole of the British Expeditionary Force there was in every way reasonable, provided it could be done without loss of time.

General Aston's force, the Marines still clad in blue,<sup>2</sup> landed at Dunkirk on the night of 19th/20th September, and was joined by the aeroplane and armoured car detachment under Commander C. R. Samson, R.N., which had remained in Flanders when the Marines had been withdrawn from Ostend on the 31st August. Additional motor cars, and fifty motor buses, with their drivers enlisted as

<sup>1</sup> See Volume I. p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> Their khaki followed a couple of days later. They had no 1st Line Transport.



Sept. Marines, were subsequently sent to the force, so that it was within General Aston's power to represent the advanced guard of a considerable body of troops—the herald, for all the Germans might know, of the mounted brigades and divisions of the Territorial Force and any newly constituted forces that might be available.<sup>1</sup>

On the 28th September, at the request of the Governor of Dunkirk, one Marine battalion was sent to Lille to facilitate and cover the withdrawal of the Territorial troops who were scattered over the Département du Nord.

On the 30th September Br.-General A. Paris—who had taken over command of the Marine Brigade in consequence of the illness of General Aston—leaving his untrained recruits behind, moved his headquarters and three battalions—about 1,500 strong—from Dunkirk to Cassel sixteen miles southward. Cassel is built upon an isolated hill, which rises like a volcanic cone from the plain of Flanders and commands a view of the country for many miles round. The Marines patrolled the neighbourhood on bicycles and in motor buses, whilst Commander Samson's armoured cars, from their headquarters at Morbecque (8 miles south of Cassel), working with local French troops, searched the country further afield and cleared it of German cavalry patrols.<sup>2</sup>

The situation at Antwerp had by this time begun to give rise to serious consideration. The fortress was threatened by a new danger. Hitherto it had been merely invested on the south-eastern side, so that the Belgian Army, by holding the line of the Dendre, was able to keep open for communication with France a corridor between the Dutch frontier and the river, truly only some thirteen miles broad at Termonde, where the Dendre joins the Schelde, but then widening out rapidly. As long as this corridor remained open, the retreat of the Belgian Army was secure, and even if the passage of the Dendre were forced, the Schelde above Ghent offered a parallel and more effective barrier, some fifteen miles further west, for the later stages of a retreat. The danger now arising was that if the German front in its extension northwards was prolonged much further in the same direction—it seemed

<sup>1</sup> The Germans themselves had sent to the field army the Reserve troops detailed for the protection of the Schleswig coast as early as the 23rd August ("Mecklenburg's Söhne im Weltkriege", vol. 12, p. 296).

<sup>2</sup> The main bodies of the German *I.* and *II. Cavalry Corps* were then approaching Lens some thirty miles south-east of Cassel.







Ordnance Survey, 1924

to be aiming at Lille—the Belgian Army in Antwerp, 70 Sept. miles north-east of Lille, might be cut off or, at any rate, might find its retreat to join hands with the Allies threatened, not only by the investing Army, but also by the right wing of the main German hosts.

Remembering the fate of Liége and Namur, it was not to be hoped that Antwerp could resist for long if the German super-heavy artillery were employed against it, and this artillery had been released by the fall of Maubeuge on the 7th September. The great Belgian entrenched camp, so long regarded as a sure haven of refuge in time of adversity—though it continued a menace to the German communications so long as there were field troops in it—was sooner or later bound to fall into the hands of the enemy, unless it could, like Verdun, Nancy and Belfort, be included in the general front of the Allies. The Belgian General Staff maintained careful watch, so that the Field Army might remain with the garrison of Antwerp until the last moment, and yet not miss the opportunity for getting clear and marching to join the Allies.

It was obvious that a strong British force landed at Dunkirk or Ostend would serve General Joffre's offensive plans if things went well with the Allies, for it might be in time to outflank the Germans; and if the enemy's movements were too rapid for this, and Antwerp were in danger of being isolated, it would be on the spot to assist the Belgians to cover the retreat of their Field Army.

On the 25th September, in response to a notification from French General Headquarters, that in view of the combats raging on the left of the Franco-British line the moment was opportune for an attack from Antwerp against the German communications, the Belgians made preparatory movements for a sortie on a large scale. But the indications of a general attack on Antwerp becoming very evident, the scope was reduced to an advance by the 5th Division, parts of the 4th Division,<sup>1</sup> and the Cavalry Division against the German forces reported moving westwards from Alost. Some progress was made, but on the 27th the German *37th Landwehr Brigade*, supported by heavy artillery, reacted strongly, and the operation was brought to an end.

<sup>1</sup> This division was in position near Termonde to defend the passages of the Schelde in the neighbourhood, and to cover the Pays de Waes, lying between it and the coast, and the west front of the fortress of Antwerp. The 5th Division was east of the 4th.

## THE SIEGE OF ANTWERP

28 Sept.  
Map 3.  
Sketch 2.

That everything that was to be done to save Antwerp must be done quickly was made clearly manifest on the 28th September ; for on that day the Germans, abandoning a mere passive investment, began the bombardment of the forts of the outer line in the south-eastern or 3rd sector of defence.<sup>1</sup>

A great and varied amount of work to prepare the fortress for defence had been carried out by the Belgian Engineers subsequent to the commencement of hostilities. According to a prearranged plan inundations had been formed, field defences between the forts constructed and the foreground cleared. The devastation which these operations occasioned in the environs of a wealthy city like Antwerp, well wooded and dotted with chateaux, villas, cottages and gardens, with a general appearance, except for its complete flatness, of the Weybridge or Ascot district, was enormous. But, as a matter of fact, it did more

<sup>1</sup> The formal order :—" H.M. the Kaiser has ordered the capture of "Antwerp. General von Beseler will take over command before Antwerp", was issued on the 9th September before the catastrophe on the Marne was known at O.H.L. "Antwerpen", p. 20.

The defences of Antwerp were briefly described in Volume I. p. 18. They consisted of an outer ring of 18 forts some seven to nine miles from the city, an inner line of older forts only two to three thousand yards from it, and a continuous enceinte, a high earthen parapet abutting at either end on the Schelde, enclosing the town. The enceinte and older forts had broad wet ditches.

The fortifications were obsolete both in design and construction. Large forts had been regarded as shell traps for many years, and both in France and Germany the bulk of the guns had been placed in small batteries outside the forts, and in the latest designs of "Feste", shelters, magazines, flanking guns and machine-gun nests had been similarly divided and scattered. It was known, after the siege of Port Arthur, that the Antwerp casements and magazines were not 6-inch-shell proof. Funds had not, however, been forthcoming, and though some of the shelters had been strengthened by a layer of concrete, even this, according to German accounts ("Antwerpen", p. 23), was defective both in composition and methods of mixing and placing—and this opinion has been confirmed by inspection by British officers. Lieut.-General Deguise, the Commandant of the Fortress in 1914, states in his book on the defence that, as regards armament, there was only one 6-inch gun per mile of front, only two machine guns per fort, and that many of the flanking guns were old cast-iron smooth bores, dating from 1862. There was no telephone system, and no means of observing fire. The garrison consisted of men of the older classes who had left the colours five to thirteen years before, "who remembered nothing of the little they had learnt in their short colour service", and all units were very short of officers. But, worse even than this, there was no smokeless powder, and there were no high explosive shells. Every time a gun was fired it gave away its position by a panache of smoke. Only one of the German batteries was within the extreme range of the Belgian guns.

harm than good. The clearing of the foreground had, 28 Sept. unfortunately, the effect of making the forts clearly visible to the enemy; they stood up like islands in the midst of a calm green sea: mere targets for a hidden foe. The trenches, too, in consequence of water lying close to the surface of the ground, were little more than a foot deep; and they had no shell-proof cover, even against field guns.

The German commander in charge of the attack, General von Beseler, an Engineer officer, who at one time had been Assistant Chief of the Prussian General Staff, had at his disposal<sup>1</sup>:—the *III. Reserve Corps* (*5th Reserve and 6th Reserve Divisions*), the *4th Ersatz Division*, the *Marine Division*,<sup>2</sup> the *26th, 37th and 1st Bavarian Landwehr Brigades*, six Foot Artillery regiments, two regiments and four companies of Engineers, two Air Detachments, etc.<sup>3</sup> Among the artillery weapons were four 42-cm. (16·2-inch) short naval guns, five 30·5-cm. (12-inch) coast mortars, four 30-cm. (12-inch) Austrian Skoda mortars, forty-eight 21-cm. (8-inch) mortars, seventy-two 15-cm. (5·9-inch) howitzers and forty 10 and 13-cm. (4 and 5-inch) guns—in all 160 heavy and 13 super-heavy guns.

The scheme for an attack on Antwerp, drawn up in peace time by the Prussian General Staff, contemplated an attack with eleven divisions on the eastern front, where no inundations were possible. General von Beseler had, apart from the technical troops, only the equivalent of six divisions, and, in addition to the duties of the siege, had to guard the Tirlemont-Brussels section of the Liège-Brussels railway, which was absolutely vital for the supply of the right wing of the German Armies. He had also to prevent communication between Brussels and the Belgian Army. These various tasks could only be solved by an attack from the position held by the Germans south of Antwerp. The sector opposite it contained, from west

<sup>1</sup> For German details of the attack see "Antwerpen"; the "M.W.B." 75/1919; Stegemann, vol. i. p. 82 *et seq.* For the Belgian:—"Military Operations of Belgium", Section VI.; the Belgian official anniversary publications in the Press, 1920; B.B.S.M.; and "Deguise".

<sup>2</sup> Under Admiral Schröder. It was formed at Kiel 29th August 1914 from the Kiel and Wilhelmshafen "sea battalions", coast defence artillery, and detachments, a *Landwehr* field artillery brigade, a cavalry squadron, and naval recruits. It was subsequently kept up to strength by reinforcements from the Army, and expanded into a corps of 3 divisions (see "Marinekorps").

<sup>3</sup> These are the troops given in the official "Antwerpen"; the equally official "S. und G." gives in addition the *27th, 28th and 41st Landwehr Brigades* and the *1st Reserve Ersatz Brigade*, the last of which will be found engaged at Ghent.



to east, the forts Waelhem, Wavre Ste. Catherine, Koningshoyekt, Lierre, and Kessel, with four intermediate works, and behind these lay the strong water line of the river Nethe, with an inundation making it apparently a formidable obstacle four to five hundred yards wide.

The general idea of the German plan was to break through at one place:—Forts Wavre Ste. Catherine—Waelhem, due south of Antwerp, and then to extend the gap northwards. A covering line was formed between the Grande Nethe and the Schelde, just in front of Mechlin (Malines) by the *6th Reserve* and *5th Reserve Divisions*, the *Marine Division*, and the *4th Ersatz Division*, which, advancing from their entrenchments on the north side of Brussels, drove back the Belgian outposts some four or five miles. The other available troops, including a number of small detachments drawn from garrisons in Belgium, covered the flanks of the German line.

Under the protection of these troops, the siege artillery was deployed east and south of Mechlin, and the fire of the super-heavy guns concentrated on the two selected forts. The Dorpveld and Boschbeek Redoubts, which lie close together north-east of Fort Wavre Ste. Catherine, were also attacked by 8-inch mortars, whilst other heavy guns fired on the field defences between the forts, the Nethe bridges and the Antwerp waterworks, which lay north of Waelhem.

At the moment of the German advance to Mechlin, the bulk of the Belgian Army was in the 4th Sector, between the 3rd (the one attacked) and the Schelde, with only detachments holding the 3rd; the 4th Division was at Termonde. The 1st and 2nd Divisions were now sent to the 3rd Sector, and the 5th Division was held in general reserve behind them.

29 Sept. By 6 P.M. on 29th September, Fort Wavre Ste. Catherine was so much damaged that it was evacuated. Its condition after one day's bombardment, and the destruction done at Fort Waelhem, left no possible doubt as to the fate awaiting the permanent fortifications of Antwerp, and made it merely a question of days as to when the fortress would go the way of Liége, Namur and Maubeuge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> That the German shooting, directed by numerous "sausage" balloons, was extraordinarily accurate could in 1923 still be verified. It was, to all intents, range practice, without hindrance from the Belgians whose guns were outranged. Practically all the hits were on the vital parts of the forts: the gun emplacements, flanking arrangements and magazines.



## THE EVACUATION OF ANTWERP COMMENCED

29 Sept.

From the 29th September onwards Belgian Army Headquarters began to make definite preparations for the evacuation of Antwerp. Ostend was selected as the new base, and to it, in order to make the Army free to move, were gradually sent all that could be dispensed with: the wounded, the prisoners, recruits and untrained men, besides much of the transport and material of all kinds, including ammunition, supplies and manufacturing establishments. This was no light task, for at Antwerp itself there is no permanent bridge across the Schelde, though two pontoon bridges had been formed, one near the centre of the city, and the other at Burght, just above it.<sup>1</sup> The first railway bridge is about twelve miles above at Tamise, and to reach it trains had to proceed up the right bank and cross a bridge over the river Rupel, which was exposed to the enemy's fire, and less than ten thousand yards from his nearest super-heavy guns south-west of Mechlin. Nevertheless, from the 29th September to the 7th October, trains were able to pass every night, with lights out, without being molested, or even attracting the enemy's attention.

Map 3.  
Sketch 1.

To keep open the corridor between the Dendre and the coast, for the eventual movement of the Field Army, the Belgian 4th Division was already at Termonde, where a German attack seemed most likely, and the Cavalry Division watched the river line.

On the morning of the 29th September, Baron de Broqueville, the Belgian Prime Minister and Minister of War, asked the British Minister in Belgium, Sir Francis Villiers, to report officially that if the Germans carried the outer line of forts completely and were in a position to attack the second, the Court and Government would be removed from Antwerp, and the Field Army—only 65,000 strong—would then be withdrawn to Ostend, leaving the garrison, some 80,000 men, to continue such defence as was possible. Next day, Baron de Broqueville pointed out the serious position that had arisen at Antwerp owing to the effect of the German heavy guns, emphasized the unequalness of the conflict, and made a formal and earnest appeal for assistance. Sir Francis Villiers, in forwarding the message, added that, in the opinion of his Military Attaché,

<sup>1</sup> These two bridges formed part of the equipment of the fortress and were held ready for such an emergency. They each provided only one single track.

Colonel W. E. Fairholme, it would greatly raise the morale of the Belgians if even a small unit of British troops could be sent to give visible evidence of British co-operation. Admiral H. F. Oliver of the Admiralty, Colonel A. G. Dallas of the Military Operations Directorate of the War Office, and Lieut.-Colonel R. N. Harvey, R.E., of the School of Military Engineering, Chatham, were thereupon sent to Antwerp to report on the situation.

The Belgian Prime Minister made somewhat similar communications to the French Legation, and on the evening of the 30th the French Government, then at Bordeaux, informed the British Ambassador that they were prepared to send fifteen to twenty thousand men to assist the Belgians, if the British would do the same.

The loss of Antwerp was a catastrophe which the British Government could not face without an effort to avert it. That the actual investing force consisted of only four divisions and some *Landwehr* or *Landsturm* brigades—whatever might be at hand to reinforce it—was accurately known, and it therefore seemed possible that the siege might be raised without the use of a large force. The Belgian High Command suggested that the best direction for action was from Ghent against the left rear of the besieging forces, where lay the heavy artillery.

At the instigation of Lord Kitchener, the British Government, though at the time unwilling to allow another man to leave the United Kingdom, offered to send to the relief of Antwerp the 7th Division and the 3rd Cavalry Division, which were at home nearly ready to move, if the French would furnish one Regular division. As an earnest, they ordered two 9·2-inch and eight 6-inch guns to Antwerp.<sup>1</sup> If the despatch of immediate help did not result in the raising of the siege, it was hoped that the resistance of

<sup>1</sup> Of this artillery, only six 6-inch guns reached Antwerp, and were there rendered unserviceable, as it was found impossible, owing to railway conditions, to withdraw them. The 7th Siege Battery, with one 9·2-inch gun on railway mounting and two 6-inch guns, was formed on 2nd October 1914. It reached Ostend on the 6th, its guns were landed and its advanced party got as far as St. Nicholas (12 miles south-west of Antwerp). The battery then received counter-orders. All guns were re-embarked on the 11th and the battery sent to Havre. The 9·2-inch howitzer, originally allotted to it, went to France with the 8th Siege Battery, where it will be heard of as "Mother".

Considerable assistance was furnished at Antwerp by Commander A. S. Littlejohns's naval armoured train, with six 4·7-inch guns, organized in Belgium between 9th and 25th September. After taking an active part in the defence, the train left the fortress and got clear on the 7th October, the day before the evacuation.

Antwerp would be prolonged thereby for a fortnight or **1 Oct.** three weeks. The British Expeditionary Force, on arrival from the Aisne, might then undertake relief operations, unless a success of General Joffre had so improved the general situation as to compel the Germans to retire from before the fortress.

General Joffre did not, however, see his way to send Regulars, as all his troops who had been brought to the left wing were heavily engaged. He suggested a Territorial division and a Marine brigade from Havre as the French contingent. This could be brought up in ten days' time. The French Government, on the advice of Lord Kitchener, were informed on the 2nd October that this force, even in combination with what Great Britain proposed to send, was considered by the military authorities inadequate to compel the enemy to raise the siege; and that, if nothing more could be done, it would be better to abandon its despatch and not risk it against the superior German forces in the field. The gravity of the situation at Antwerp and the serious effect on the campaign of the loss of the fortress were again emphasized. At this juncture more emphatic argument came from the Germans.

#### THE GERMANS BREAK THROUGH THE OUTER FORTS

During the 1st October, General von Beseler had come to the conclusion that he must accelerate his proceedings, in view of his flanks being in continual danger, his ammunition supply limited and its replenishment difficult owing to the demands of the Armies for railway truckage. He therefore ordered the assault at 4 P.M. of Forts Wavre Ste. Catherine and Waelhem, and of the Boschbeek and Dorpveld Redoubts, by the *5th Reserve* and *Marine Divisions*. The first of these forts, which had been evacuated, and Dorpveld, which had to be stormed, fell into German hands that night; but Fort Waelhem and Boschbeek were not captured until the afternoon of the 2nd October, after all available guns had again been turned on to them.<sup>1</sup>

On hearing of the first result of the German assault, Colonel Dallas, Lord Kitchener's representative, at midnight of 1st/2nd October, telegraphed from Antwerp that the situation was undoubtedly critical; and added that

<sup>1</sup> A number of photographs of the damage done to the forts will be found in "Antwerpen".



some definite statement as to assistance would have an excellent effect on the Belgian Government. Admiral Oliver concurred in the message, and asked that the First Lord of the Admiralty might be informed of it.

2 Oct. Later, at noon on the 2nd, Colonel Dallas telegraphed that the enemy had made no further progress and that the great slaughter of Germans reported had much encouraged the Belgians, who were about to counter-attack in the neighbourhood of Fort Wavre Ste. Catherine. But even as his message was being sent off the situation changed for the worse.

### THE WITHDRAWAL TO THE NETHE

When the Belgian Supreme Council of National Defence<sup>1</sup> met at 11 A.M. on the 2nd October, the situation in the 3rd Sector was reported to be as follows:—

“Fort Wavre Ste. Catherine and Dorpveld Redoubt are occupied by the enemy. Fort Waelhem is badly damaged. Fort Lierre has just been hit by a 16-inch shell. One fort and two redoubts are more or less intact (Koningshoyekt, Tallaert and Boschbeck). The intervals between Fort Waelhem, Fort Wavre Ste. Catherine and Dorpveld Redoubt are occupied by the enemy. A counter-attack made to retake them has failed. The 1st Division is reduced to 4,800 rifles.”

A large gap having been made in the outer defences, the Council were unanimously of opinion that the left of the Army should be withdrawn north of the river Nethe, the next line of defence, which completely covered the gap and still secured the city from bombardment. The actual time of the withdrawal was left to the divisional commanders.<sup>2</sup>

After discussion of the different lines of defence that were available behind the intermediate position on the Nethe, it was decided that the Council of Ministers and the Government should leave Antwerp next day. King Albert, however, added that he should not quit the town until the population had been warned.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This Council, under the presidency of the King, was composed of the Minister of War and the highest military authorities, and must be distinguished from the Council of Ministers.

<sup>2</sup> “B.B.S.M.” pp. 15 and 16/1923.

<sup>3</sup> “B.B.S.M.” p. 16/1923. Proclamations warning the population of the intended departure of the Government were posted up in Antwerp during the 2nd.

During the course of the day, in consequence of 2 Oct. the destruction of gun emplacements, explosion of the magazines and exhaustion of the means of defence, the remaining works in the 3rd Sector, except the Duffel Redoubt, were evacuated or surrendered, and Forts Waelhem and Koningshoyekt were occupied by the enemy.

The troops of the 2nd Division on the eastern part of the 3rd Sector commenced their retirement across the Nethe about noon, forced thereto by the enemy. At 1 P.M. General Deguise directed the 1st Division to conform, and occupy the partly prepared intermediate position from Rumpst on the Rupel (2 miles north-west of Fort Waelhem) via Duffel to Lisp (a mile above Lierre)—which passed west of Lierre in the arc of a circle—with bridge-heads at Duffel, Ander Stad (a mile below Lierre) and Lierre. He drew the 2nd Division into reserve, its place on the left from Duffel to Lisp being taken by the 5th Division. The Belgians were able to occupy the new positions comparatively undisturbed: the Germans did not attempt to follow, although the inundations on the left (south) bank of the Nethe, being for the most part only eight to twelve inches deep, were no obstacle for infantry.<sup>1</sup>

Reconnaissances made this day showed that no Germans had passed the Dendre, and the line of retreat through the corridor was still secure.

#### THE DESPATCH OF BRITISH ASSISTANCE TO ANTWERP

At 10 P.M. on the 2nd October a telegram, sent off at 8.30 P.M., reporting the decision taken at the Belgian Supreme Council of National Defence, was received in London from the British Minister. It stated that the Belgian Government and the Queen would leave next day for Ostend, and that the King and the Field Army would also retire from Antwerp, beginning the movement on the 3rd by sending an advanced guard towards Ghent, with the hope of co-operating eventually with the Allied Armies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "B.B.S.M." p. 356/1923.

<sup>2</sup> For the complete understanding of the situation, it must be noted that there was already a Belgian "groupement" at Ghent under General Clooten: four battalions of volunteers, young soldiers whose training had not been completed, parties of Gardes-Civiques, the Ghent chasseurs à pied, Liège chasseurs à cheval, Brussels artillery, a squadron of gendarmes and two companies of the French 5th Territorial Regiment. "La Campagne de l'Armée Belge", p. 108. It was reinforced on the 5th October, when three cavalry regiments, formed into an independent brigade, were sent there.



The telegram added that it was rumoured the fortress would hold out five or six days longer, but so prolonged a resistance seemed improbable once the Government and Court had left.

The information in this message, which according to the Belgian General Staff records goes beyond what was decided at the Council of National Defence, had been given to Sir Francis Villiers by the Belgian Prime Minister. No decision as regards the Field Army had been taken.<sup>1</sup>

The receipt of Sir Francis Villiers's telegram naturally caused alarm. Sir Edward Grey, after consultation with the First Sea Lord (Prince Louis of Battenberg), proceeded with him to Lord Kitchener's house in Carlton Gardens, and Mr. Churchill, who was in the train en route for Dover and Dunkirk, was recalled. On his arrival at midnight, the three Ministers drafted a reply to be sent to Antwerp. In this the Belgian Government were urged to hold the fortress if possible until the issue of the main battle in France had been determined, and in any case to continue the struggle with the Field Army, if only for a few days. The immediate help promised was small—it only amounted to a brigade of Royal Marines—but hopes were held out that other troops might be sent from the main Armies, and if possible from England also.

At the same time it was decided that Mr. Churchill himself, instead of going to Dunkirk on naval matters as previously arranged, should proceed to Antwerp. Sir Francis Villiers was informed of this by a second telegram and asked to suggest that the Belgian Government should postpone their final decision as to their departure until King Albert should have given Mr. Churchill audience. To  
 3 Oct. this course the Belgian Government, on being informed of the two telegrams, unanimously agreed. Mr. Churchill left London by special train at 2 A.M. on the 3rd October and reached Antwerp in the afternoon. He at once had an interview with Baron de Broqueville, the Belgian Prime

<sup>1</sup> The Belgian official account ("B.B.S.M." p. 136/1923) states:

"It is only just to remark in reference to this subject that, contrary to what the British Government and Mr. Churchill in particular believed, there had been no question on the 2nd October of evacuating the fortified position of Antwerp next day. The Council of National Defence only contemplated on the 2nd October the departure of the Members of the Government for the new base in preparation at Ostend, towards which G.Q.G. began to evacuate its depots and supply stores. No decision had been taken with regard to the departure of the Field Army."

This has been confirmed by reference to the Historical Section of the Belgian General Staff.

Minister, and was received by the King. At 6.35 P.M. 3 Oct. Mr. Churchill telegraphed to London that, subject to confirmation, he had made the following arrangement with M. de Broqueville. No formal agreement was, however, recorded or judged necessary :

*First:* The defence would be continued with energy and preparations made for a resistance of at least ten days.

*Secondly:* The British Government would state definitely within three days whether they could send a substantial relieving force or not, and, in the former case, when it would arrive.

*Thirdly:* If the assurance could not be given within the time limit, the Belgian Government would be free to abandon the defence or not, as they thought fit.

*Fourthly:* Should they in the above case decide to withdraw the Field Army, the British, although not able to launch a large expedition, would send troops to Ghent and other points to assist in covering the retirement. Meanwhile, the local defence should be helped in all minor ways by sending guns, Marines and naval brigades.

Measures had already been initiated to fulfil this last condition : guns were on their way ;<sup>1</sup> Colonel Sir Percy Girouard had been sent to take charge of them ; and the four battalions of the Royal Marine Brigade<sup>2</sup> had started.

General Paris's men detrained at Vieux Dieu station (between Nos. 4 and 5 of the inner forts) at 1 A.M. on the 4th October. They were received with great enthusiasm, and at 6 A.M. the brigade, having been put at the disposal of Lieut.-General Guiette, commanding the 5th Division, marched to take over the place in the line of the 1st Belgian Infantry Regiment opposite Lierre.

Map 4.  
Sketch 1.

A first step in the solution of the problem of finding the additional force was made by the First Lord of the Admiralty who suggested the despatch of two naval brigades, which with the Royal Marine Brigade made up the infantry of the Royal Naval Division<sup>3</sup> then in course

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> It was only 69 officers and 2,016 other ranks strong, with twelve machine guns.

<sup>3</sup> The organization of a naval division to include and reinforce the Royal Marine Brigade had been sanctioned on the 14th August (see footnote on p. 28). The division was administered by a Standing Admiralty Committee, and organized on military lines, but the two naval brigades were composed of such stokers of the Royal Fleet Reserve and ratings of the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as were supernumerary after the Fleet had been manned to its full establishment. Before October came, however, many of these men had been withdrawn

of formation. On the morning of the 4th October Mr. Churchill was informed that this was approved, that the War Office would send the newly formed 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division, and that the French Government had promised the 87th Territorial Division, to arrive at Ostend 6th to 9th October, and the Brigade de Fusiliers Marins, consisting of 6,000 seamen and 2,000 Zouaves,<sup>1</sup> under Admiral Ronarc'h. These various formations made a total of some fifty-three thousand men.

Sir John French specially drew the attention of General Joffre to the anxiety which the British Government felt about the condition of Antwerp and begged for an assurance that there should be no delay in the movements which would relieve the situation there.

#### THE RETIREMENT FROM THE NETHE

3 Oct.  
Map 4.  
Sketch 1.

During the 3rd October the Duffel redoubt, behind the captured fort of Wavre Ste. Catherine, was evacuated, all its ammunition having been exhausted. The Germans concentrated the fire of a number of medium guns on Fort Kessel, now on the flank of the gap. This failing to reduce it, on the 4th they turned their heavy weapons on to it, and in a few hours put it out of action and compelled its evacuation. The Germans also made preparations for forcing the line of the Nethe, aiming particularly at the town of Lierre and the village of Duffel, where there were bridges. Lierre lies at the junction of the Grande and Petite Nethe, which there unite to form one stream, the Nethe; it was in the line opposite Lierre, as we have seen, that the Royal Marine Brigade arrived on the 4th, when the Belgian infantry regiment next to the right and some artillery were also placed under General Paris's command.

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for naval purposes, and the numbers required to make up the two brigades had been completed by a draft of two thousand men, chiefly miners who had been recruited for the New Army battalions of the K.O.Y.L.I., D.L.I. and Northumberland Fusiliers, but for whom the military authorities had no equipment. After a single month in camp near Walmer, they were naturally raw; none of the new hands had received more than two days' instruction in musketry, owing to lack of rifles, which did not arrive at Walmer until about a week before the Royal Naval Division was ordered to Belgium; and personal and regimental equipment was generally lacking. The officers were a mixture of naval and military, active and retired, and Royal Naval Volunteers and others not trained in land warfare. The staff of the division consisted of four officers, with two officers for liaison duties.

<sup>1</sup> The Zouaves eventually remained in Paris.



In the course of the 4th, after a bombardment of the northern banks of the Nethe, the enemy forced the troops defending the ground in the angle between the Grande and Petite Nethe to retreat. He also passed the Dendre and endeavoured to cross the Schelde at Schoonaerde and Termonde. 4 Oct.

The so-called position, encircling Lierre on the northern side, which the Marines took over consisted merely of an occasional wide shallow trench, but often no more than the natural hedgerows, with, in places, a single trip wire as obstacle. Except for bombardment of the position and some fighting in the streets of Lierre, in which some of the Marines took part, the 4th October was unexciting; the Germans rarely offered a target for rifles and the British losses were solely from distant artillery fire, to which no reply could be made except by Commander Littlejohns's armoured train. According to the Belgian records, it was on this day that the General Staff learned for the first time of the projected move of the British Expeditionary Force from the Aisne to the coast, when Sir John French sent an officer to inform King Albert that he expected to have one corps at Lille on the 8th and four corps in the same region by the 14th.

In the early morning of the 5th, aided by enfilade fire from the outskirts of Lierre, two German battalions of the *26th Reserve Regiment* managed to cross the Nethe at a farm called Ander Stad, a mile below Lierre, by means of a trestle bridge, prepared on barrels in a creek conveniently at hand.<sup>1</sup> Supported by artillery fire, though in a critical position, they managed to hold on until reinforced at night-fall by two other battalions. By this time the enemy, in spite of stout resistance, was also in occupation of Lierre up to the Petite Nethe, and elsewhere had reached the inundation line. He began the bombardment of the next occupied fort on the north, Broechem. It was completely put out of action and evacuated next day. Nevertheless, the Belgian front on the Nethe being unbroken though pushed back to the road near Ander Stad, the High Command was resolved to continue the struggle; for as long as the enemy was kept from advancing beyond the Nethe he could not seriously bombard the city of Antwerp nor even the inner forts. 5 Oct.

The position of the four German battalions north of

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the banks and cultivation, little can be seen of the crossing-place from the north bank.

6 Oct. the Nethe invited counter-attack, but orders for this were not issued until 1.15 A.M. on the 6th, and did not reach all the Belgian troops nor the British Marine Brigade in sufficient time to be acted on; but several Belgian units did advance and achieved a temporary success. Then as they were unsupported the enemy took heart and they were driven back, seriously shaken. During the 6th, therefore, the defenders retired to another partially prepared position half-way between the Nethe and the inner forts, and the fate of Antwerp was sealed.

Map 4.  
Sketch 1.

This position extended from Vremde (5 miles south-east from the centre of Antwerp) south to the Lierre—Antwerp road, and then turned back south-westwards passing south of Contich. The Marine Brigade occupied trenches north of the Lierre—Antwerp road, and came under the command of Lieut.-General Dossin of the 2nd Division.

Thus by 3 P.M. on the 6th October, though the 3rd and 6th Divisions still held out in front of the line of outer forts between Fort Waelhem and the Schelde, south-west of Antwerp, west of the sector attacked, the Belgian line on the south and south-east was now only five or six miles in front of the city, which was thus liable to accurate bombardment as soon as the Germans could bring their heavy guns over the Nethe.

Shortly before the retirement from the Nethe, the two British naval brigades arrived. They had crossed from Dover to Dunkirk on the night of the 4th/5th, but had reached Antwerp only on the morning of the 6th, delayed by the trains conveying them having to take a circular route. It had been intended to move them up to support the Marine Brigade, and General Paris had been given formal command of all three brigades on the previous evening by Mr. Churchill; but at 1.50 P.M. General Deguise received the following message from General Paris:—

“The First Lord of the Admiralty has just telephoned from the Hôtel de Ville at Vieux Dieu to tell me that he desired that the following communication should be made to you:

“ ‘He has studied the action now in progress and considers that it is impossible to send the 1st and 2nd Naval Brigades up to the proposed intermediate line [gap in original message] the Lierre line on the railway north-east of Donck—Beekhoek<sup>1</sup> exposed at

<sup>1</sup> Donck is just north-west of Lierre, Beekhoek 4 miles west of Lierre. A railway runs just south of the line between them.



“present to intense fire. He has disposed them in 6 Oct.  
 “consequence on the line of the inner forts 1 to 7. If  
 “the Belgian troops can hold the line Vremde—  
 “Beekhoek [the intermediate line between the Nethe  
 “and the inner forts] until evening, the First Lord will  
 “send up the two naval brigades to support them.’”

Actually, by General Paris's orders, the 1st Naval Brigade took up position in the intervals between Forts No. 1 to No. 5, the 2nd between No. 5 to No. 8, this last being close to the Schelde. Trenches had been constructed by the Belgians in these intervals, but they were shallow and without dug-outs, and it was impossible to deepen them owing to the presence of water; the ground in front of them had been cleared for over five hundred yards so that, like the forts, they were perfect artillery targets.

#### THE GERMAN ATTEMPT TO CROSS THE SCHELDE

The western flank of the Belgian Army and the corridor to the Yser had not remained unthreatened during this period. Even though the forces in Antwerp might hold their own, there was a danger that they might find themselves cut off from the Allied main Armies and invested in the fortress. To give some idea of the situation, let the reader imagine the south-eastern corner of England, with the sea instead of the Thames north of it, and a broad river, the Schelde, instead of the Channel south of it—that is Thames and Channel interchanged. Ramsgate will represent the position of Antwerp, from which the only route for escape is south of the Thames by a passage made narrow by Holland being in possession of the area enclosed by Margate, Canterbury and Sheerness. Further, the enemy has already appeared before Folkestone (Termonde) and there is no assistance nearer than Brighton, the northern flank of a great battle line.

On the 4th October the German *37th Landwehr Brigade*, which was covering the German left at Termonde (on the Schelde 18 miles above Antwerp), was reinforced by the *1st Reserve Ersatz Brigade* and during the 5th and 6th made serious though vain attempts to force a passage of the Schelde. The main attack took place at Schoonaerde, 9 miles above Termonde, whilst smaller efforts, equally unsuccessful, were developed at Termonde itself and at Baesrode, 3 miles below it. Such indications could not be disregarded, and on the 6th the Belgian 6th Division

was sent from Antwerp via Tamise to reinforce the 4th Division and the Cavalry Division, which were on the Dendre guarding the corridor.

Nor was this the only new danger in the west: the right of the German main line of battle was creeping northwards. In the fighting in the Arras district, the *I. Bavarian Reserve Corps* had on the 5th October captured Lens and, on the same day, three German cavalry corps on the northern flank had begun a great forward movement. The *I.* and *II. Cavalry Corps* made no progress, but the *IV.*, advancing north of Lille, directed on Ypres, soon had patrols actually on the high ground, Mont Noir and Mont des Cats, south-west of that town, and some of its cyclists came into collision with a patrol of the Oxfordshire Hussars. This regiment had originally been with General Aston's Marines at Dunkirk, and was now covering the arrival at Hazebrouck by rail of French cavalry. It was the first Territorial unit to be in action.

The British Expeditionary Force was only just beginning to leave the Aisne, the *II. Corps* entraining on the 4th; <sup>1</sup> the 7th Division had certainly begun to embark at Southampton during the night of the 4th/5th, but on the morning of the 6th its transports were still off Dover. There seemed little hope that the British Government would be able to carry out the minimum of the conditions arranged with the Belgians. But even if they could not launch a substantial expedition to relieve Antwerp, they could at least send troops to Ghent to cover the retreat of the garrison.

#### THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE BELGIAN FIELD ARMY FROM ANTWERP

On the 4th October Mr. Churchill had telegraphed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, from Antwerp suggesting that he should take formal military command of the British force there; but the offer had not been accepted, as his services were required at the Admiralty. He was informed that Lieut.-General Sir Henry Rawlinson had been selected for the post. This officer, who had been temporarily in command of the 4th Division on the Aisne, arrived at Antwerp by motor about noon of the 6th  
6 Oct. October. His instructions were to take command of the British relieving force when it should be assembled, and,

<sup>1</sup> See Volume I. p. 407.

with the associated French force, to make a vigorous 6 Oct. offensive by surprise against the left of the German investing army, and capture or silence the German guns.<sup>1</sup> In company with Mr. Churchill, he inspected the intermediate position in front of the inner forts. This line was only partially prepared, its flanks were open and unprotected; and even if it could be held it was not far enough forward to prevent the enemy from bombarding the city. He therefore concurred in the conclusion arrived at by General Paris that it would be preferable to occupy the line of the inner forts, which was in every way stronger. General Deguise was informed of this opinion, and the course suggested was formally adopted at a meeting of the Council of National Defence, held at 4 P.M. under the presidency of King Albert, at which Sir Henry Rawlinson and Mr. Churchill were present. To hold the greatly shortened perimeter proposed—11 miles instead of 30—the garrison of the fortress, with the Belgian 2nd Division and the Naval Division, were ample in number: indeed the trenches were overcrowded with men. The only alternative put forward was the recapture of Lierre and the line of the Nethe, and for this the available forces, only the two naval brigades being fresh, were held to be insufficient.

The three-day limit having expired without any Allied troops arriving at Ghent to cover a withdrawal, the Belgian Commander-in-Chief was free to move the Field Army as he considered best. It was decided, therefore, at the same meeting of the Council, that the greater part of the Army should immediately be withdrawn across the Schelde. On the west bank the Field Army would still be in a position to co-operate with any relieving force that might be sent, and no object would be served by it remaining with the broad river in its rear and taking the risk of being caught in Antwerp.

The movements decided on were carried out during the following night, the 6th/7th October. The eight forts of the inner line were occupied by the Belgian fortress troops, and the trenches between Forts 2 to 7 by the two naval brigades, supported by the 4th and 7th Fortress Regiments, with the Belgian 2nd Division and the Marine Brigade in reserve. The Belgian 1st, 3rd and 5th Divisions crossed to the west bank of the Schelde, where the 4th and 6th and the cavalry had already been sent.

Sir Henry Rawlinson returned to Bruges on the night

<sup>1</sup> For the instructions see Appendix 8.

of the 6th to organize the relieving force, and Mr. Churchill accompanied him en route for Ostend and the United Kingdom. Before leaving, the latter gave General Paris written instructions that he was to exert his utmost efforts to secure the prolongation of the defence, but to insist on being excluded from any capitulation or surrender, and in all circumstances to keep and consider himself and his force free to make their way to the left bank of the Schelde in order to rejoin Sir Henry Rawlinson's command or any other British force.



## CHAPTER II

ANTWERP (*concluded*). 7TH TO 14TH OCTOBER 1914

(Maps 1, 4, 5 ; Sketches 1, 2)

### THE LANDING OF THE BRITISH 7TH DIVISION

DURING the daylight of the 6th and the morning of the 7th, the whole of the transports carrying the 7th Division <sup>1</sup> had been safely convoyed from Dover to Zeebrugge. The naval arrangements for their protection were not made easier by a sudden change of destination, necessitated by the urgency of the military situation, from Boulogne and Dunkirk to a port nearer Ghent. Map 4.  
Sketch 1

General Capper's orders,<sup>2</sup> given to him in London, were

<sup>1</sup> The 7th Division (for Order of Battle see Appendix 1), commanded by Major-General T. Capper, was composed of men, averaging 5 years' service, from healthy stations, with very few reservists. Of the infantry, the 1/Grenadier Guards, 2/Scots Guards, 2/Yorkshire Regiment and 2/Border Regiment, were in the United Kingdom when war broke out. The 2/Scots Fusiliers and 2/Wiltshire came from Gibraltar; the 2/Royal Warwickshire and 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers from Malta; the 2/Queen's, 2/Bedfordshire and 1/South Staffordshire from the Cape; and the 2/Gordon Highlanders from Egypt. For the field artillery, instead of four, only two brigades, one of them brought back from South Africa, were available, but part of the deficiency was made up by two batteries of horse artillery from home and two heavy batteries. Thus the division had forty-eight field guns instead of fifty-four, and eight 4.7-inch guns instead of eighteen howitzers and four 60-pdrs. Infantry battalions and artillery brigades do not, however, make a division, and although the assembly of the 7th Division was begun early in September, there were difficulties in the formation of the Signal Company and other small divisional units—the two field companies R.E. came from South Africa—and in the collection of ordnance stores and transport, which were not overcome until October had arrived. Nevertheless, though its last units arrived only ten days before the division started for Belgium, the greater part of the division was in the New Forest for about three weeks previous to embarkation and had a certain number of brigade and two divisional exercises before it was called upon to take the field. When the summons came on the afternoon of Sunday 4th October for the division to embark that very night for an unknown destination, it was complete in all material respects, except in artillery.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 9.



to disembark at Zeebrugge and, like those of Sir Henry Rawlinson, to co-operate with a French division, and a brigade of Fusiliers Marins, with a view to assisting and supporting the Belgian Army defending Antwerp. They contained the suggestion that an offensive against the Germans, who were correctly estimated at four or four and a half divisions—not first-line troops—would force them to retire, and give opportunity to capture the heavy guns, so placing Antwerp for a time out of danger.

On landing on the 6th, the divisional commander was at once pressed by the local Belgian military authorities to entrain for Antwerp; but as he had been specially warned by the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on no account to run the risk of getting shut up in Antwerp, he declined to accept the proposal. Shortly after, the 7th Division received instructions from Sir Henry Rawlinson to proceed to Bruges, where he had now arrived. By 5 P.M. on the 7th, the infantry and dismounted men travelling by rail, the division was practically all concentrated there, and it was billeted in the town and suburbs.

It now became evident that the expedition to relieve Antwerp as planned could not be carried out. Of the expected force of 53,000 men, only the 7th Division had arrived, and during the day the War Office forwarded news of a large enemy concentration, principally cavalry, north of Lille, which it was suggested was intended to act in the direction of the recently landed British force. On this day, indeed, the German *IV. Cavalry Corps*, on the extreme flank of the main army, was approaching Ypres, but without any knowledge of the new British forces.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE GERMANS CLOSE IN ON ANTWERP

7 Oct. Round Antwerp itself the situation had not improved. In the early hours of the 7th, favoured by a thick fog, two battalions of the German *37th Landwehr Brigade* succeeded in crossing the Schelde at Schoonaerde (9 miles above Termonde) in boats. Although the rest of the brigade did not follow until evening, when a bridge was completed, all efforts of the Belgian 6th Division to dislodge them failed. The Belgian Field Army had moved from Antwerp none too soon, for the width of the corridor of escape between the Germans at Schoonaerde and the Dutch frontier was

<sup>1</sup> Its orders were to get at the left and rear of the main Allied line via Lille. It moved via Bailleul and Menin. Poseck, pp. 180-2.

now reduced to less than twelve miles. In consequence, 7 Oct. it was decided to begin the retreat of the Belgian Field Army from Antwerp to a position behind the Terneuzen Canal, which runs northwards from Ghent to the Dutch frontier. The 1st and 5th Divisions, which had suffered most during the siege, with a brigade each of the 3rd and 6th Divisions, were sent off first, whilst the remainder, without the 2nd Division (still in Antwerp), acted as flank guard on the Schelde and then on the Durme.<sup>1</sup> King Albert at the same time moved his headquarters from Antwerp to Selzaete, 25 miles further west. There was already a Belgian composite brigade at Ghent, and about 6.30 P.M. the Chief of the Belgian Staff sent a message to Sir Henry Rawlinson asking that any British troops available might be sent there also, as a Bavarian cavalry division with infantry and guns was reported near Cruyshautem (12 miles south-west of Ghent).<sup>2</sup>

The German investing force during the 7th, after a heavy bombardment of Fort Broechem (the next on the east to Fort Kessel, occupied on the 5th) and of the Massenhoven Redoubt north of it, entered both these works to find them already evacuated. Thus the gap in the defences was widened to 14 miles. But the main work of the day was bringing forward the heavy artillery over the Nethe. Owing to bridging difficulties, this was not completed until the 8th, but at 11.25 P.M. on the 7th, after due notice had been given, the bombardment of the city of Antwerp was begun with 6-inch howitzers. General von Beseler was hastened to this step by a telegram received at 5 P.M. from the Supreme Command :

“ It is most urgent that the early fall of Antwerp should take place, so as to free the troops with you for employment on the right wing of the forces.”<sup>3</sup>

The only cheering news on the 7th October was that the brigade of Fusiliers Marins under Rear-Admiral Ronarc'h had been despatched on its way north by rail from Pierrefitte on the outskirts of Paris.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This river flows due east from Lokeren into the Schelde.

<sup>2</sup> This was part of the *IV. Cavalry Corps* moving on Ypres.

<sup>3</sup> “ Antwerpen”, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> According to Admiral Ronarc'h, p. 39, its total effective strength was “ 170 officers, 6,500 petty officers and sailors, of whom the greater part were reservists. The actual fusiliers only amounted in all to “ 1,450 petty officers and seamen.” The brigade included a machine-gun company with sixteen guns, and each of the six battalions had four machine guns.

The general situation on the evening of the 7th, therefore, was somewhat complicated, and there was no supreme commander in charge of the operations as a whole:—the garrison of Antwerp was, with the 2nd Division and the Royal Naval Division, holding the line of the inner forts; the Belgian Field Army was moving away from Antwerp between the coast and Ghent; a French naval brigade was on its way to Ghent; and the newly-landed British 7th Division was concentrated at Bruges. Between these forces and the left of the general line of the Allies—which was near Lens, some fifty miles south-west of Ghent, covered by cavalry extending to near Hazebrouck—three German cavalry divisions were attempting to move westwards. Of the original British Expeditionary Force, the II. Corps was approaching Abbeville, the III. was entraining near Soissons to follow it to Flanders, but the I. was still in position on the Aisne.

#### THE DECISION TO EVACUATE ANTWERP

8 Oct. The operations on the 8th October comprised three separate but inter-related episodes which, as the hours passed, reacted more and more on each other. These operations were the reinforcement of the German attack on the corridor west of the Schelde, near Schoonaerde; the withdrawal of the Belgian troops and Royal Naval Division from Antwerp; and the collection near Ghent of an Allied flank guard to assist in covering the retirement of the forces from Antwerp.

Taking these three episodes in order:—during the day, the *37th Landwehr Brigade*, the whole of which was now across the Schelde at Schoonaerde, was reinforced by the *1st Bavarian Landwehr Brigade* and the *9th Ersatz Brigade*. This last belonged to the *4th Ersatz Division*, which had been ordered to hand over its front towards Antwerp to the *Marine Division* and move to Schoonaerde. The Belgian flank guards offered what opposition they could, but in the course of the day the three German brigades pushed their advanced guards nearly to Lokeren, some eight miles from their bridge over the Schelde and about the same distance from the Dutch frontier. The action may seem extraordinarily bold for a small force, but no serious opposition was expected, as the German aviators had reported in the afternoon that the roads leading west from Antwerp were in general still clear, though many



troops were assembled near the lower pontoon bridge in 8 Oct. the town, and crowds of fugitives were fleeing north towards the Dutch frontier.<sup>1</sup> It therefore seemed to the German commander that no effort to escape was being made by the Belgian Field Army, and that he might proceed to invest Antwerp on the western side.

There were two lines of railway available to accelerate a withdrawal from Antwerp. Starting from St. Nicolas on the western bank of the Schelde, a double line ran via Lokeren to Ghent and there diverged in many directions. In view of the near approach of enemy forces to the latter two places named, it was not to be expected that the line could be used for very long. The other line, a single one, ran close to the Dutch frontier from St. Nicolas via St. Gilles Waes—Moerbeke—Selzaete (now the Belgian Headquarters) to Bruges and beyond. It had been hoped to transport the Belgian 1st and 5th Divisions by rail, but actually there was only sufficient rolling stock to carry the dismounted troops of the 1st Division to Ostend. These were sent off early, and the rest of the 1st Division, with the 5th, followed by road. The 2nd Division still remained in the fortress. This left the 3rd Division, which was to be the last to move, near Lokeren, with the 4th and 6th Divisions on either side of it, and the Cavalry Division on the western flank covering the railway to Ghent. The 4th and 6th Divisions commenced their retirement during the day, though both were delayed by the German threat towards Lokeren, and during the night of the 8th/9th the greater part of the Field Army was withdrawn behind the Ghent—Selzaete Canal. To assist in covering the retirement of the Antwerp garrison, it left strong rear guards on a line from Loochristy (6 miles west of Lokeren) northwards, and the Cavalry Division near Lokeren. One infantry brigade, the 4th, with artillery, was sent to Ghent. Here the French Fusiliers Marins also arrived during the morning. On reaching Dunkirk at 3 A.M. on the 9th they had been sent on towards Antwerp, but at Adinkerke, ten miles on the journey, information was received that the railway was broken at Lokeren, and they were diverted to Ghent. In the course of the day, therefore, there were assembled near this town two Belgian brigades, eight squadrons of Belgian cavalry, all at much reduced strength, and the French Naval Brigade.

<sup>1</sup> "Antwerpen", p. 87.



THE OPERATIONS OF THE BRITISH 7TH DIVISION  
AND LANDING OF THE 3RD CAVALRY DIVISION

In view of the information that strong German forces were advancing from Lille, the 7th Division, on the 8th October, marched from Bruges to Ostend and formed on an arc of a circle four miles outside the town to cover the landing of the 3rd Cavalry Division.<sup>1</sup> General Capper's division remained thus disposed until next day. The cavalry had not commenced embarking at Southampton until 10 A.M. on the 7th, owing to ships not being ready, and only after a five hours' wait at Dover, had it been convoyed across to Ostend, where it began to arrive about 4 A.M. on the 8th. Four ships, apparently picked at hazard, for they contained parts of several different units, were taken, however, to Zeebrugge. After disembarkation at Ostend, the division, at 11.25 P.M., received orders to cover the Ghent-Ostend railway. These orders, however, were cancelled next morning. Thus on the night of the 8th/9th, excluding the forces operating in front of Antwerp, the situation was as follows:—the main Belgian Army had practically escaped any danger of envelopment and

<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Cavalry Division (for Order of Battle see Appendix 1), under Major-General the Hon. Julian Byng, consisted of only two brigades, the 6th and 7th. The third brigade, the 8th, was formed in November, when the Leicestershire and North Somersetshire Yeomanry joined the division and a redistribution of regiments was made.

The 6th Cavalry Brigade was made up of the Royal Dragoons and 10th Hussars, from Potchefstroom, South Africa, where they had been quartered together. They had arrived only four days before they were called upon to re-embark. The third regiment, the 3rd Dragoon Guards from Egypt, joined a month later at Ypres. Most of the mobilization equipment of the brigade arrived only the day before it sailed, and though the two regiments had brought their South African ponies with them, these were insufficient in number to mount them at war establishment, and Yeomanry horses to make up the number, and saddlery, sent in separate ships, reached the brigade on landing in Belgium.

The 7th Cavalry Brigade was nominally composed of three regiments of Household Cavalry, but as these units were very weak—for they had already furnished three squadrons to the 4th Cavalry Brigade—they were made up to establishment by the incorporation of reservists belonging to other cavalry regiments, mainly those in India.

Of the two batteries of horse artillery, one recently abolished had been reconstituted as best might be; the other brigade and divisional units, engineer, signal, transport, medical and veterinary, were improvised. The Field Squadron R.E. thus formed was handed over to the 2nd Cavalry Division, and another one had to be got together at short notice. Even when the division entrained on the 6th October, its mobilization equipment was still incomplete. Much of the harness was deficient or too small, the Field Ambulances, in particular, having none, and the Field Squadron R.E. had to be left behind for lack of essential bridging and other stores; it rejoined a few days later, after the division had retired on Ypres.

was behind the canal running northward from Ghent ; 8 Oct. at Ghent was an Allied force of three brigades ; and at Ostend, 37 miles west-north-west of Ghent, were the British 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division. The danger spot for the Antwerp garrison was Lokeren (12 miles east of Ghent), to which place the German brigades advancing from Schoonaerde were very close.

#### THE 8TH OCTOBER AT ANTWERP

At Antwerp itself the 8th October was a most fateful day. In the course of it General von Beseler managed to convey the greater part of his heavy artillery across the Nethe and therefore was in a position to begin an effective bombardment of the city. He selected as artillery targets Forts 3, 4 and 5, marking thus the sector in the inner ring at which he had decided to break through ; but the city itself was also shelled, and fires broke out which it was impossible to extinguish, the waterworks having been damaged during the bombardment of the outer forts. The gates of the ramparts of the enceinte, where there were bridges over the wet ditches, received specially heavy fire. Whether owing to the haste with which the German guns had been put in position or from other causes, Forts 3, 4 and 5, though shelled, were not badly damaged ; in fact, Fort 4 was held to the last. It was Nos. 1 and 2, towards which the German infantry were advancing,<sup>1</sup> which occasioned alarm. Forts 8 to 5 face south, and then the line gradually curves northward, so that Nos. 1 and 2 face east ; thus if these fell into the hands of the enemy he would be behind the line of the others and in a position to attack them from the rear and cut off the retreat of their defenders.

Before dawn on the 8th, General Paris received information<sup>2</sup> that Forts 1, 2 and 4 had fallen, and he repeated this at a conference which met at 9 A.M. at the headquarters of General Deguise, the Military Governor of Antwerp, now in sole command of the fortress. It was agreed that if the forts had indeed been lost and could not be retaken, the whole line was untenable and would have to be

<sup>1</sup> It was the German right flank guard, the *26th Landwehr Brigade* and a small cavalry and cyclist detachment.

<sup>2</sup> From General Dossin, commanding the 2nd Division, "commander of the second line of defence". General Paris was nominally under the orders of both General Deguise and General Dossin.

abandoned at nightfall and the defenders withdrawn to the ramparts of the city. These were an exceedingly strong line of earthen parapets, with shelters and stores under them, strongly flanked by low caponiers<sup>1</sup> and with wet ditches, sixty yards wide and from ten to fifteen feet deep. Practically impregnable by assault, they could not, however, save the city from bombardment. The civil authorities, nevertheless, made no difficulties in this respect. The Communal Council had on the 7th declared to General Deguise that "they were ready unanimously to accept all the consequences of a defence maintained to the last moment, and that they would never seek to influence the decision of the military authorities responsible for the defence".

The fortress troops in Antwerp were sufficient in numbers to defend the ramparts, and it was decided at a conference between Generals Deguise, Dossin and Paris that the British brigades and the Belgian 2nd Division should be withdrawn and join the main Army on the other side of the Schelde. The report of the fall of Forts 1, 2 and 4 proved on investigation to be incorrect; a statement was, however, drawn up by General Paris, and agreed to by General Deguise, to the effect that if Forts 1 and 2 were reduced and if Belgian troops were not available to reoccupy this sector of the defences, the three brigades of the Naval Division would be withdrawn at dusk. General Paris then informed Sir Henry Rawlinson that he would probably be forced to retire during the night, and had the routes for withdrawal reconnoitred. General Rawlinson, on his part, sent an officer to make arrangements with the headquarters of the Belgian Field Army for trains for the Naval Division, having received orders from the War Office that it should proceed by rail.<sup>2</sup>

At 1.45 P.M. General Dossin, as senior officer of the troops which were next to leave the fortress, issued warning orders for the retirement of the 2nd Division and the British, to take effect when it was no longer possible to defend the line of the inner forts.

Towards 5 P.M. definite information was brought by two Belgian officers to General Deguise's headquarters at the Maison du Pilotage near the lower bridge—to which building General Paris, for ease of communication with him, had also moved his Staff—that Forts 1 and 2 had been

<sup>1</sup> Blockhouses for flanking purposes, which project from a front.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 64.



abandoned, and that there was no prospect of reoccupying 8 Oct. them. News also came that some of the Naval Division between Forts 3 and 4, and the right of the Belgian 6th Brigade had retired. The report was untrue as regards the British,<sup>1</sup> but may have been founded on the fact that some men of the 1st Naval Brigade were about this time moved into Forts 4 and 5 to support the garrisons.

“ In view of the lamentable state of the Belgian troops, “ most units having ceased to exist as combatant formations and being no longer in a state to offer effective “ resistance \* \* \* and that the men of the Naval Division “ were for the most part untrained and badly equipped ”,<sup>2</sup> General Paris now informed General Deguise of his instructions that the Naval Division was on no account to be caught in Antwerp.<sup>3</sup> He expressed his opinion that to prolong the struggle on the line of the forts was to court disaster; and that as it would shortly be necessary to withdraw his division, he would act as rear guard if the 2nd Division also retired.

The situation was then reported by telephone to Lord Kitchener and Sir Henry Rawlinson. But, further reports of the evacuation of the forts coming in, General Paris definitely informed General Deguise that he intended to withdraw his three brigades that evening, to which the latter replied, with deep emotion, “ *Alors c'est fini, mes hommes sont usés* ”. It was agreed that no movement should take place until dusk and that the Naval Division should move first. General Paris then communicated this decision personally by telephone to the First Lord of the Admiralty, who demurred, but could not object. A staff officer who went to the telephone to give Lord Kitchener the same information found that he was required to take down a message from the War Office. This was to the effect that His Majesty's Government had decided that the British contingent was to be withdrawn across the Schelde that night. He replied that the decision had been anticipated by events.

#### THE EVACUATION OF ANTWERP

About 5.30 P.M. instructions were given by General **Map 5.**  
Deguise for the retirement of the Belgian 2nd Division and **Sketch 1.**

<sup>1</sup> Deguise, p. 153 fn.

<sup>2</sup> Translation from written statement sent by General Paris to the Belgian Court of Enquiry and given in Deguise, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 48 above and Deguise, p. 153.



the Royal Naval Division.<sup>1</sup> He directed that if the necessity arose the British were to have priority of passage at the bridges. General Paris immediately issued his orders, which, in the absence of a divisional signal company, were carried by three officers. Fortunately shortly before any movement took place, German infantry advanced towards the inner forts and were fired on with vigour, which undoubtedly assisted in deceiving the enemy as to a retirement being in contemplation. The Belgian 2nd Division commenced withdrawing through the town: one brigade at 6.30 P.M., the second at 7.45 P.M., and the third at 8 P.M. Accompanied by many of the fortress troops, they completed the passage of the river by the lower bridge between 8.30 and 11.30 P.M. Marching westwards via Vracene (8 miles west of the Schelde), where they rested several hours, and St. Gilles Waes, they reached Moerbeke about midday and rejoined the main Belgian Army that evening at Salzaete after a thirty-mile march, undisturbed except by congestion on the road caused by the columns of refugees.

General Paris's orders reached the Marine and 2nd Naval Brigades between 6.30 and 7 P.M. His troops were then in position as follows: 2nd Naval Brigade on the right from Fort 7 to midway between Forts 4 and 5, 1st Naval Brigade on the left of it up to Fort 2, Royal Marine Brigade in reserve behind the centre. The orders directed the three brigades to retire by different routes across the Schelde and rendezvous  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles beyond, at Zwyndrecht, a village upon which the roads from the two bridges converged. The 2nd Naval Brigade and the Royal Marine Brigade—less the Portsmouth Battalion which was detailed as general rear guard—moved off on receipt of their orders, but of the 1st Naval Brigade, only the Drake Battalion. A mistake had occurred as regards this formation. The officer—not a member of the Regular forces—who conveyed the orders for its retirement, by a misunderstanding that has not been satisfactorily cleared up, delivered them to the naval captain who was commanding the Drake Battalion instead of to Commodore Henderson, the brigade commander, and insisted on his moving at once. The Drake Battalion marched away, but the rest of the 1st Naval Brigade was left without orders and in ignorance of the situation. It was not until Lt.-Colonel Ollivant, the G.S.O. 1 of the division, came round some time afterwards to satisfy himself that all the troops had left that the brigade

<sup>1</sup> "B.B.S.M." pp. 610-11/1920.

commander heard of the orders, which were then given to 8 Oct. him. He at once made arrangements to move off at 9.30 P.M., but owing to heavy shelling it was not possible to begin the withdrawal until half an hour later.

It was a still starlight night, many houses and barges in Antwerp were burning : the streets of the deserted town were littered with the broken glass of windows, and the débris of fallen buildings. Several huge reservoirs of petroleum near the upper bridge having been set on fire by the Belgian Engineers, thousands of tons of oil were flaming and heavy masses of black smoke hung like a pall over the river. Beyond the river not only troops, but refugees, with every kind and size of vehicle three abreast on the roads, and cattle and other animals, formed an inextricable mass of confusion, moving westwards. The throng was so thick that it was impossible for commanders to send back orders and obtain reports, except with long delays, and difficult even for columns of troops to keep together as connected bodies.

The Royal Marine Brigade (less the rear guard battalion) and the 2nd Naval Brigade crossed the river in good order by the upper bridge about 10 P.M., and with the Drake Battalion of the 1st Naval Brigade—which used the town bridge—reached Zwyndrecht about 11.30 P.M., where it was reported to General Paris that the whole three brigades were present. After an hour's halt the force pursued its way to Beveren Waes, but, finding no trains there, continued on towards St. Nicolas. Only at 2.30 A.M. did the general learn, a message sent to him at Zwyndrecht having miscarried, that trains were waiting for him at St. Gilles Waes, to the north of St. Nicolas, nearly six miles away, and that the enemy was at Lokeren south-west of him. There was no course but to turn north at once by cross-country lanes. The march now proved exceedingly trying, for in the dark the press of troops, refugees, and vehicles, made the pace seldom more than a mile an hour, with constant halts and stoppages. The first troops began to arrive at St. Gilles Waes soon after daylight on the 9th October ; motor omnibuses were sent back to pick up stragglers ; and all eight battalions present were despatched westwards to Ostend, the last train leaving about 9 A.M. This left, however, the three battalions of the 1st Naval Brigade, with the Engineers, and the Portsmouth Battalion, R.M.L.I., to be accounted for. In the confusion of the night march, the press at the station, and the crowding of

the trains with refugees, amongst whom the soldiers were a mere handful, their absence was overlooked; the fact that the Drake Battalion of the 1st Naval Brigade was present seemed to give assurance that the whole of the 1st Naval Brigade had arrived—in fact, the officer who had carried the original orders for the brigadier reported to General Paris that it was present.

But this was far from being the case. The measures taken to meet and guide the brigade had unfortunately failed. Lt.-Colonel Ollivant, after waiting for it at the lower bridge till 2 A.M. and finding that it did not come, assumed that it must have crossed by the other bridge; he was very shortly afterwards kicked by a horse and for a time rendered incapable of performing his duties. Thus, no steps were taken to bring in the 1st Naval Brigade. When finally it started, about 10 P.M., followed by the Marine rear guard battalion, the Hawke Battalion crossed by the upper bridge, but when the other battalions had passed through the town and reached the Schelde about midnight, they found the Belgian gunboats engaged in destroying the bridge. A crossing was made by ferry steamers and barges previously collected by the Staff in view of such a contingency. About this time the enemy began to burst shrapnel over the site of the bridges. All the battalions however reached the rendezvous at Zwyndrecht between 3.30 and 4 A.M. No signs of the division were found there, so the brigade commander requisitioned a motor car—his own having been appropriated by some one else—and, after an hour's search, learnt from a Belgian Staff officer that the British had gone on to St. Gilles Waes. Almost without food—only a ration of a quarter of a pound of raw meat could be found to serve out to the men—and without water, the three battalions of the 1st Naval Brigade trudged slowly amongst a crowd of refugees to St. Gilles Waes, arriving at the station in dribbles between 11.30 A.M. and 3.45 P.M. Arrangements had been made for a train for them by the officers of the British Mission at Belgian G.H.Q., who heard that they were coming along; but at 4.15 P.M., when part of the men were already seated, information was received by telephone that the Germans were attacking Moerbeke, further down the line.

His men being neither trained nor equipped for field operations, exhausted by the night march and lack of food, and without any ammunition except the small amount



remaining in their pouches, Commodore Henderson decided 9 Oct. to march them across the Dutch frontier, which lay three miles to the north. There about fifteen hundred men, rather more than half the original strength of the brigade, arrived about 10 P.M., were stopped and disarmed. A party of about forty stragglers, who arrived at the frontier later, succeeded during the night in making their way undetected along it. They were picked up next day and brought on by motor omnibuses sent out to search for them.

A different fate befell the Portsmouth Battalion, R.M.L.I., the rear guard. On reaching St. Gilles Waes and hearing from the Belgians that there were no trains, it continued on to the next station, Kemseke, which it reached about 8 P.M., picking up some six hundred stragglers of the 1st Naval Brigade en route. Here at last it found a train, which it had to share with hundreds of refugees. But the party was not to escape. As it approached Moerbeke the engine was derailed by a shell, and the enemy seemed to be approaching from all sides. During the day the Germans had advanced from the Schoonaerde direction, but fortunately with caution; by their own accounts, much harassed by fire from motor machine-gun batteries. The *37th Landwehr Brigade* eventually occupied Lokeren and dug itself in there with the *9th Ersatz Brigade* 4 miles on its left at Zeveneecken, and two more brigades behind it. Only a part of the *1st Bavarian Landwehr Brigade* pushed on and reached Moerbeke, just in time to prevent the passage of the Marines. The sudden stoppage of the train and the continued firing brought about a panic among the refugees, whilst approaching darkness added to the confusion of the scene. With difficulty, the Marine battalion extricated itself and attacked towards the village. There a collision took place with the leading battalion, the *1st Landwehr Regiment*, which was soon supported by other troops of the brigade. Colonel Luard, the battalion commander, with about half his men who were on the right, got clear and marched on ten miles to Selzaete, where he was able to entrain again, but 5 officers, 931 British other ranks—all stragglers from the 1st Naval Brigade except about three hundred—and some four hundred Belgians, who had turned eastwards down the railway when the attack took place, were forced to surrender.

In Antwerp itself, after the departure of the Belgian 2nd and the British Naval Divisions, nothing of military



value could be gained by an attempt to make a prolonged defence of the ramparts, and the greater part of the fortress troops succeeded in reaching the western bank of the Schelde, the next line of defence, and then followed the 2nd Division. On the morning of the 9th October the Germans found some of the inner forts abandoned, and General von Beseler therefore ordered the bombardment to be stopped, and sent a parlementaire into the city with a formal summons to the Military Governor to surrender. Simultaneously, however, the civil authorities of Antwerp had come out to General von Beseler to beg for the cessation of the bombardment, and towards evening, under threat of recommencement of it, they signed at Contich the capitulation of the fortress, including such forts as  
 10 Oct. were still holding out. When on the morning of the 10th, therefore, the Chief of the Staff of the Military Governor, furnished with full powers, appeared to discuss terms of surrender, he, again under the threat of reopening of fire, had no alternative but to agree to the terms already arranged. The prisoners taken, according to the official German account, which gives no numbers, were "strikingly few". They amounted, in fact, to the Military Governor and his staff officer, who remained behind to make a formal surrender, and a few men found in the forts.

The British effort to save Antwerp had failed. Although the continued resistance of the garrison for several days after the bombardment had rendered the outer forts untenable, did not have the startling effect which the final days of Masséna's defence of Genoa in 1800 exercised on the fate of the Marengo campaign, it nevertheless had a lasting influence on the operations.<sup>1</sup> Until Antwerp had fallen the troops of the investing force were not available to move forward on Ypres and the coast; and though, when they did, they secured Zeebrugge and Ostend without a struggle, they were too late to secure Nieupoort and Dunkirk and turn the northern flank of the Allies, as was intended. Further, since Beseler's divisions were required to cover the approach marches of the four new German corps in their advance on Ypres,<sup>2</sup> the whole general movement of the German forces in the north was affected. We have seen that on the 7th October Beseler received a re-

<sup>1</sup> Had Maubeuge held out only a few hours longer the German *VII. Reserve Corps* could not have been on the Aisne to stop the advance of Haig's corps (see Vol. I. p. 338).

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. V.

minder to accelerate matters. The advantage of a day, nay even a few hours, in the advance of the Germans on Ypres or an equal delay in the arrival of the French and British reinforcements might, as will be seen, have tipped the scale to the enemy's side. Had events turned out more favourably for the main Allied armies in the first week of October, the defence of Antwerp might have proved decisive.

The three infantry brigades, without divisional troops, which first bore the name of the Royal Naval Division, were highly tried. The Royal Marine Brigade did well in the hottest part of the line at Lierre, and the enemy sought a passage of the Nethe elsewhere. The men of the 1st and 2nd Naval Brigades showed most creditable firmness under heavy artillery fire; without any training in field fortification, they entrenched themselves; without training in musketry, they used their rifles with effect; without any supply service or regimental transport, they lived on such food as could be procured locally from time to time, and one day it was only turnips from the fields. Cheerfully accepting the lack of valises, mess-tins, water-bottles, ammunition pouches and other normal equipment, they contented themselves with the allowance of one great-coat to every two men, and carried their bayonets, for want of other means, in their gaiters or their pockets. The wonder is, not that they failed to accomplish what was hoped, but that they fought so well. Had it not been for the unfortunate mistake of the delivery of the message for the 1st Brigade to one of its battalions, and the report that it had been duly acted on, the whole division would no doubt have got clear, for the Belgian 2nd Division easily did so.<sup>1</sup>

It would appear that the great mistake committed by all the Allies as regards fortresses in the early days of the war was that they considered any second line troops good enough to hold and defend them. This was most completely disproved,<sup>2</sup> and experience went to show that the

<sup>1</sup> "Antwerpen", p. 86. The total losses of the Royal Naval Division in the Antwerp Expedition were :—

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Other Ranks.</i>
Killed . . . . .	7	50
Wounded . . . . .	3	135
Interned . . . . .	37	1,442
Taken Prisoner . . . . .	5	931

<sup>2</sup> Compare Namur, Maubeuge, Novogeorgevicsk, Fort des Romains, with Grand Couronné and Verdun. It may be added that the Germans came to this conclusion after 1870-1 (see Cardinal von Widdern's "Krieg auf den rückwärtigen Verbindungen des deutschen Heeres").

best troops, or, at any rate, a good proportion of young troops, are required to conduct an active defence and resist the moral effect of being abandoned by the Field Army, the strain of heavy shelling, and the destruction of works supposed to be impregnable.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE OPERATIONS ROUND GHENT

8 Oct. We must now return to the British 7th Division which on the evening of the 8th October was round Ostend covering the disembarkation of the 3rd Cavalry Division.

During the day Sir Henry Rawlinson had kept the War Office informed of the situation both by telephone and telegraph, and shortly after 5 P.M. Lord Kitchener wired to him as follows, informing him of the decision to evacuate Antwerp and giving him instructions to protect the withdrawal :—

“ You must arrange for retirement of British-Belgian forces first on Ghent and thence towards Ostend. We are ordering British Naval forces to retire to St. Nicholas, with Belgian troops left for defence of Antwerp.

“ If the French Marine Fusiliers now at Ghent could help to keep the line open at Lokeren, it would make things safer. You should cover retirement from Ghent with cavalry and 7th Division, leaving what garrison may be required to hold line of communication.

“ The British Naval Division, having no wheeled transport, should come by rail from Antwerp as far as possible.

“ Time your arrival at Ghent so as to cover retirement of the Belgian troops and Naval Division, and do not remain at Ghent longer than possible.”

In further instructions, the Secretary of State for War directed that Sir Henry Rawlinson's troops should cover the retirement of the Belgian Army from the line Ghent—Selzaete to the area Ostend—Thourout—Dixmude, and subsequently form the left column of the advance eastwards of Sir John French's force then moving up. On the 9th, therefore, General Rawlinson sent 7th Divisional

<sup>1</sup> In a secret report, dated Brussels 1915, from the German General of Engineers and Pioneers to the Military Government of Belgium, the following passage occurs :—

“ Neglecting the factor of the military value of the garrison, it may be said that the works [of Antwerp] were surrendered or abandoned because the blast of explosion and the deleterious gases freed thereby rendered it impossible for the personnel to remain. Nowhere had measures been taken for ventilation nor for dealing with the invasion of the eupolas by deleterious gases.”



headquarters, two infantry brigades, five batteries and the 54th Field Company R.E. to join the French Naval Brigade and the two Belgian brigades at Ghent. He assembled the rest of the 7th Division and the 3rd Cavalry Division at Bruges. The French 87th Territorial Division, which had been ordered to Antwerp, was now by General Joffre's direction detained at Poperinghe. 9 Oct.

During the 9th October Sir Henry Rawlinson's force, which had been operating independently on orders from the War Office, was placed under Sir John French, who for convenience gave it the name of the IV. Corps. The leading British corps from the Aisne, the II., was only completing detainment at Abbeville on this day. There seemed little hope of establishing the Allied front, at any rate for the moment, further east than the line St. Omer—Dunkirk, then held by French cavalry and Territorials, and Ghent, where Rawlinson was, lay sixty miles on the enemy's side of it. The Field-Marshal therefore instructed Sir Henry Rawlinson to retain his position as long as he could do so without getting involved, and if pressed to retire slowly westwards to the line St. Omer—Dunkirk. The news that reached the IV. Corps from Belgian Headquarters during the day was more reassuring: the retirement of the troops from Antwerp was proceeding satisfactorily, and the only danger seemed to be from the direction of Alost, fifteen miles south-east of Ghent. During the night of the 9th/10th a German brigade, the *1st Reserve Ersatz*, did appear near Melle (4 miles south-east of Ghent) in the south-east section of the defences, in the loop of the Schelde held by the Fusiliers Marins; but it was driven off with heavy loss, without coming in touch with the British, and a reconnaissance made next day failed to discover it.

During the 10th King Albert held a conference at Ostend with General Pau, representing General Joffre, and Sir Henry Rawlinson; the international force remained covering Ghent, to enable the Belgians to rally the 2nd Division and other detachments from Antwerp behind the Ghent—Selzaete Canal. The main Belgian Army moved westwards, so that by night the 1st, 3rd and 4th Divisions were grouped round Ostend, the 5th and 6th lying to the south at Thourout and Dixmude, with the 2nd and the Antwerp fortress troops north-west of Ghent. The portion of the British 7th Division left at Bruges was moved out to Beernem, seven miles on the road to Ghent. 10 Oct.



On this day, still ignorant that the Belgian forces had escaped from investment in Antwerp, the German troops—*4th Ersatz Division* and two *Landwehr brigades*—that had crossed the Schelde and appeared at Lokeren and Moerbeke, instead of pursuing, turned eastwards towards Antwerp, in evident hopes of hemming in the Belgians.<sup>1</sup> It was not until next day that the real situation was discovered and that orders were issued for the *III. Reserve Corps*, with the *4th Ersatz Division* attached, to move westwards. The direction first given to it was Courtrai, in order that it might extend the main German front; this was soon after changed to the coast at Blankenberghe and Ostend, which was to be reached via Ghent and Bruges.

#### THE WITHDRAWAL TO THE YSER AND TO YPRES

1 Oct. During the 11th the approach of considerable hostile forces, closing round Ghent, became apparent, and in the course of the afternoon, the troops from Antwerp having rejoined the Belgian Army, the international force began to withdraw from the neighbourhood of the city: the Belgian brigades, about 3 P.M., Admiral Ronarc'h's brigade at 7.30 P.M. and the British at 10 P.M. Through lack of a common commander for these various troops, there was during the night some confusion and delay, but as the enemy did not attempt to follow up the retirement, no harm resulted. Germans, however, entered Ghent a few hours after the Allies left. Owing to the crowds of civilians, although explosives were taken to the spot by the 54th Field Company R.E., it had been decided not to blow up the large rail and road bridges in Ghent, but some of the Schelde bridges south of Ghent were demolished.

The 7th Division moved in the first instance ten miles westwards, to the neighbourhood of Aeltre; thence, after it had picked up its detachment from Bruges which had come south to meet it, it was ordered to Ypres. During its march the 3rd Cavalry Division, which early in the day had moved via Thourout to Roulers, covered its southern flank; the French Naval Brigade moved ahead of it to Dixmude. The 7th Division spent the night of the 12th/13th at Thielt. Here news reached General Capper that the German cavalry which had been in the Hazebrouek district, was falling back before the advance of the British II. Corps and cavalry, so that the country behind him—

<sup>1</sup> "Antwerpen", Skizze 7.

that is westward of him—was clear. On the night of the 13th/14th the 7th Division was at Roulers, still covered on the south by the 3rd Cavalry Division. Next day the latter got in touch with General Allenby's cavalry near Kemmel, and the whole IV. Corps reached Ypres without interference from the enemy, the German *IV. Cavalry Corps* having moved southwards four days previously. In conjunction with the French 87th Territorial Division—originally detailed for the relief of Antwerp—which was now in occupation of Ypres, General Rawlinson took up an outpost line covering the town. The marching on the pavé roads and the haste of the operations had been very trying to the infantry of the 7th Division, who, brought for the most part from foreign stations, were not in hard condition, and the men arrived tired and short of sleep, little guessing they were to remain unrested and unrefreshed for many days to come. In Ypres the inhabitants were found carrying on as usual; but one incident enlivened the arrival of the British. As the billeting party of the 2/Bedfordshire was engaged in chalking the doors of houses with the number of men to be accommodated, a party of Uhlans appeared and, being promptly fired on, fled to the refuge of a wood, where some twenty were rounded up by a detachment of the 10th Hussars.

It remains to bring the Belgian Army into its place in the line. By a prodigious effort it had baffled its colossal adversary and finally escaped him, but now after more than two months of uninterrupted operations and all the moral suffering which the gradual abandonment of national territory brought with it, time was required for rest and reorganization. It was at one moment proposed that the Belgians should retire west of the line St. Omer—Calais, but this, though completely justified by what they had gone through, meant giving up the last corner of Belgian territory and was more than the spirit of the nation could endure. It was decided, therefore, as the Germans were pressing on, that the Army should concentrate in the area Dixmude—Nieuport—Furnes (5 miles south-west of Nieuport), with its base at Dunkirk in place of Ostend. The retirement was therefore continued on the 11th and 12th, covered by the two cavalry divisions—a second having been formed from divisional cavalry—cyclists and motor machine-gun sections. On the 14th the Belgian divisions began preparing on the Yser the defences that were to mark the line from which the Germans were never able to drive them.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EXTENSION OF THE FRONT IN FLANDERS BY THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

#### THE ADVANCE OF THE II. CORPS TO LA BASSÉE. THE BATTLE OF LA BASSÉE

8TH TO 22ND OCTOBER 1914

(Maps 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 40; Sketches A, 2, 3, 4, 5, B)

#### THE ARRIVAL OF THE B.E.F. IN FLANDERS

**Map 6.** **Sketch 3.** DURING the 8th and 9th October, whilst the Royal Naval Division was extricating itself from Antwerp, the British II. Corps, under General Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, brought round from the Aisne, had detrained at Abbeville. It concentrated about twelve miles north-east of that town in the area, Genne Ivergny—Gueschart—le Boisle—Raye, in the valley of the river Authie, not far from the battle-field of Crécy. Simultaneously with the arrival of the II. Corps, the two cavalry divisions of the British Expeditionary Force, which had proceeded by march route, reached Picardy. Whilst on the march northwards they had been detained one day near Montdidier, where they had been placed at the disposal of General de Castelnau, who was heavily engaged, but were not employed. Having instructions to cover the concentration of the II. Corps, they moved up ten miles east of it, so that on the 9th October the 2nd Cavalry Division (Major-General H. Gough) was in the area St. Pol—Anvin—Hesdin, with the 1st (Major-General E. H. H. Allenby) a day's march behind it, around Doullens. The two divisions were on this day formed into a cavalry corps under General Allenby.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Major-General H. de B. de Lisle succeeded him in command of the 1st Cavalry Division, being himself succeeded in the 2nd Cavalry Brigade by Brigadier-General R. L. Mullens. For Order of Battle see Appendix 1.





SKETCH 3.

ADVANCE OF CAVALRY CORPS & II & III CORPS,  
8TH - 15TH OCTOBER 1914.



On the 6th October, after the British had begun to leave the Aisne, a new decision had been arrived at by General Joffre and Sir John French. It was to concentrate the B.E.F. in the area Doullens—Arras—St. Pol in rear of the area near Lille originally proposed, and then to bring it as rapidly as possible to the left of the main French forces. There it would be in a position either to break, or turn the right of the German line. 6-9 Oct.

General Joffre's intentions were defined on the 7th October as follows :—

The French First Army (General Dubail) and the Third Army (General Sarrail) which held the front from Belfort to Verdun were to maintain their positions, but endeavour to drive the enemy from the Hauts de Meuse. Map 40.

The Fourth (General de Langle de Cary), the Fifth (General Franchet d'Esperey), and the Sixth (General Maunoury) Armies, which lay west of Verdun, holding a line through Rheims, along the north of the Aisne to Braye en Laonnais, and thence to the Oise, were to establish a strong line of defence, keeping sufficient reserve to enable them either to attack straight to the front, or to assist the armies on either flank.

The Second (General de Castelnau) and the Tenth (General Maud'huy) Armies, under direction of General Foch, were to continue the action they had begun against the right flank of the enemy in the "Race to the Sea". Should they fail to drive him back, they were in any case to check his advance and prevent him from withdrawing any troops from their front.

The British Force was to assist in the action of the Tenth Army : and it was hoped that the Belgian Army would also be able to co-operate.

The concentration of the British in the north was covered by French troops. By the 8th October the French XXI. Corps, detraining at Béthune on the 7th, had extended the main line of battle to Vermelles, only four miles short of the La Bassée Canal. North of the XXI. Corps by the 9th October, were Conneau's and de Mitry's cavalry corps <sup>1</sup> holding, with a brigade of the 87th Territorial Division and a chasseur battalion in support, a line Béthune—Estaires—Merville—Aire—Forest of Clairmarais Map 6.  
Sketch 3.

<sup>1</sup> I. Cavalry Corps (Conneau) . . . 1st, 3rd and 10th Cavalry Divisions.  
 II. " " (de Mitry) . . . 4th, 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions.  
 The 7th Cavalry Division was independent. For purposes of operations, all the above were under General Conneau. (Boullaire, p. 26.)

—St. Omer, whence the other brigade of the 87th Territorial Division carried it northwards to connect with the defences of Dunkirk. Cassel was held as an advanced post by de Mitry, and Lille was still occupied by local French Territorials.

On the same day, the 9th October, the German *XIV. Corps* came up opposite the *XXI. Corps*, the left of the French line, so that the German *I. and II. Cavalry Corps*<sup>1</sup> opposing the *XXI. Corps* were freed. They were at once sent north to break through between La Bassée and Armentières and turn the Allied flank. Their progress was, however, checked by the two French cavalry corps, north of the La Bassée—Aire Canal, and there they halted. The German *IV. Cavalry Corps*,<sup>2</sup> advancing independently on the extreme northern flank, had more success and actually passed through Ypres on the 7th; but on meeting opposition from local Territorial forces near Hazebrouck it fell back on Bailleul. Thus, as Bailleul is thirty miles from the coast, there still seemed to be a good chance of the Allies being able to outflank the German right, and with the strong water-line of the La Bassée—Aire—St. Omer Canal covered by the French cavalry, there was little danger of the British concentration being interfered with, if it proceeded speedily.

Sir John French did not, however, delay his advance until his whole force was assembled. On the evening of the 8th, on which day he moved from Fère en Tardenois, his headquarters whilst on the Aisne, to Abbeville, he issued orders to General Smith-Dorrien<sup>3</sup> to push eastwards on the 9th to the line Anvin (6 miles north-west of St. Pol)—Fruges (8 miles further north-west), covered by the 2nd Cavalry Division, which was placed under his orders for this purpose. The line Béthune—Lillers, some twenty miles east of Anvin—Fruges, was given confidentially as the general direction, so that the *II. Corps* might come up on the left of the French. During the 9th, motor buses sufficient to carry nearly 10,000 men were placed by

<sup>1</sup> *I. Cavalry Corps* (General von Richthofen) contained the *Guard* and *4th Cavalry Divisions*.

*II. Cavalry Corps* (General von der Marwitz) contained the *2nd, 7th* and *9th Cavalry Divisions*.

<sup>2</sup> The *IV. Cavalry Corps* (General von Hollen): *3rd, 6th* and *Bavarian Cavalry Divisions*, had made an unsuccessful dash to Lille from Valenciennes on the 4th/5th October. It then retired towards Courtrai, whence it moved on the 7th on the front Wytshaete—Ypres through Bailleul to Hazebrouck, returning to Bailleul on the 9th. Poseck, pp. 180-6.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 10.



General Foch at the disposal of the II. Corps, and on 10-11 Oct. the 10th its two divisions, with a cavalry regiment lent by the Cavalry Corps, had advanced 22 miles from their concentration area, and were around Diéval (6 miles north-east of St. Pol) and Pernes (8 miles N.N.E. of St. Pol). The 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions were respectively south and north of the II. Corps.

Sir John French's orders for the 11th<sup>1</sup> directed the II. Corps to get in touch with the left of General Maud'huy's Army at Béthune, whence it was to hold the line of the canal westwards towards Busnes, 7 miles away, with Allenby's cavalry corps on its left.

By the evening of the 11th these orders had been carried out, and the II. Corps was in the area marked by Béthune, Hinges and Chocques, but had extended its wings to Noeux les Mines (3½ miles south of Béthune) on the right and to the Aire Canal at Mont Bernenchon (4½ miles west of Béthune) on the left. Map 6.  
Sketch 3.

The Cavalry Corps, with general instructions to support the left of General Smith-Dorrien, was ordered on the 9th,<sup>2</sup> first to make good the line Merville—Hazebrouck, next the high ground about Mont Noir and the Mont des Cats, and then the canal line Comines—Ypres. By the 11th, brushing aside a small amount of resistance from the German *IV. Cavalry Corps*, it had reached its first objective.

Meantime, the III. Corps was arriving by rail from the Aisne, and on the 10th October began detraining in the neighbourhood of St. Omer, the 1/Cameronians (19th Brigade<sup>3</sup>), the first battalion to arrive, moving out 5 miles to Renescure to cover the operation. There were serious delays, however, on the railway, and by the evening of the 11th, although all the 6th Division had arrived, part of the 4th Division was still on the way. The corps was, notwithstanding, ordered to advance to Hazebrouck (13 miles east of St. Omer) and in that position cover the detraining of the remainder of its troops. The 19th Brigade (Br.-General Hon. F. Gordon) and the XXXVIII. Brigade, R.F.A., were therefore sent forward as advanced guard, and took up a line half-way between St. Omer and Hazebrouck.

The general situation of the B.E.F. in Northern France

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 12.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 11.

<sup>3</sup> Temporarily in the 6th Division in place of the 16th Infantry Brigade left with I. Corps.



on the evening of the 11th may be therefore described as in course of concentration on a front Béthune—Merville—Hazebrouck—St. Omer, with Sir H. Rawlinson's force near Ghent,<sup>1</sup> over fifty miles to its left front.

II. Corps (with 5th Division on the right and 3rd on the left) in the area :

Béthune — Hinges — Mont Bernenchon — Choeques — Drouvin.

Cavalry Corps :

1st Cavalry Division :

Merville—Neuf Berquin—St. Venant.

2nd Cavalry Division :

round Hazebrouck.

III. Corps :

6th Division : east of St. Omer.

4th Division : detraining at St. Omer.

IV. Corps :

7th Division : at Ghent and neighbourhood, preparing to move westwards at 7 P.M.

3rd Cavalry Division : Thourout (12 miles south by west of Bruges).

I. Corps : on the Aisne.

The Belgian cavalry was north and south of Ghent, the rest of the Belgian Army retiring westwards towards Ypres—Nieupoort.

As regards the French in the north, the left of the XXI. Corps was still at Vermelles ( $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles south-east of Béthune), whence Conneau's and de Mitry's cavalry corps—which had closed to the right—extended in front of Smith-Dorrien's corps through Festubert—Vieille Chapelle to Merville, connecting there with the right of the British Cavalry Corps. The German *XIV. Corps* faced the French XXI. ; north of it, the three German cavalry corps had swung back, so that they were on the general line of La Bassée—Estaires—Bailleul.

On this day, the 11th October, the Germans attacked the entire length of the French line from Arras to Vermelles, and though they were repelled at nearly every point, they succeeded in capturing Auchy, south of the canal six miles from Béthune, and Fosse 8, just south of Auchy. There

<sup>1</sup> See p. 65. Ghent is 20 miles south-east of Bruges. It is shown on Sketch 1.

came news also of the arrival at Lille of another German corps, the *XIX.*, last heard of near Rheims. 11-12  
Oct.

Several attempts had been made by the Germans to seize Lille from the 4th onward: by the *IV. Cavalry Corps*, by flying columns from the garrison of Belgium and by the *26th Division* of the *XIII. Corps*.<sup>1</sup> On the night of the 11th/12th, the *XIX. Corps*, as was known later, entered and captured the town, after a forced march of 147 miles in seven days.<sup>2</sup> It took prisoner the garrison, a Territorial brigade some 4,000 strong, which had been assembled there to keep off marauding cavalry and hold the town in the hope that the main Allied forces would be able to reach it before the Germans.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY

The nature of the country in north-east France and south-west Belgium, generally spoken of as Flanders, in which the British Army was to struggle for four years, is so well known that a short description of its main features will suffice to recall it. A line drawn from Arras north-westwards to Calais, marks the division between two areas of entirely different characteristics. Eastwards of the line is the Flanders plain; westwards, a chalk down country, covered with just sufficient soil and humus to make it arable and very fertile. Map 6  
(for names).  
Map 1  
(for topography).  
Sketch 3.

From the dividing line the high country drops quickly to the level of the plain, the toes of the spurs that buttress it being marked by the line of canals which link Douai—Béthune—St. Omer—Calais. This system of waterways was actually designed by Vauban to serve the double purpose of a means of communication and a line of defence.<sup>3</sup> The spoil from the excavation had been piled as a rampart on the southern bank; but in 1914 little of this remained, for, being good clay, it had in the course of years been removed to make bricks.

Bounded on the south-east by the canals connecting Lens, Lille, Roubaix and Courtrai, by the Lys from Courtrai to Ghent, and on the north-west by the sea, the

<sup>1</sup> It arrived east of Lille on the 8th, having come by rail from Apremont (St. Mihiel salient).

<sup>2</sup> Kircheisen, "Völkerringen 1914-1918", ii. p. 119. The *XIX. Corps* came from the *Third Army* in the Rheims area.

<sup>3</sup> As will be seen General Foch proposed to use it for defence. It was planned by Vauban in 1706 shortly before his death, but not constructed until 1770.

Sketch A  
(end  
paper).

Flanders plain is nearly dead flat. It is broken only by a line of hills which, commencing in the west at Cassel, runs eastwards by Mont des Cats, Mont Noir, Mont Rouge, Seherpenberg to Mount Kemmel; here the range changes direction from east to north-east and becoming much lower, a mere ridge with gentle slopes, passes east of Ypres through Wytschaete, Gheluveld and Passchendaele, still falling away, until, curving north and then north-west, it merges into the plain near Dixmude.<sup>1</sup>

The coast zone, on the average ten miles broad, but double this width near the old estuaries which stretch up the river Aa to St. Omer and the Yser towards Ypres, is little if anything above sea level. Seawards it has a narrow fringe of sand dunes, but otherwise it is a dreary expanse of large grass fields, divided by canals, wide drainage dykes, ditches, and roads on causeways. These dykes are too wide to be jumped and too deep and boggy to be forded; not infrequently they are bordered by strong thorn hedges. The rivers Lys and Yser and the upper course of the Schelde are canalized, and are little better than wide ditches cut in the plain, doubled occasionally by branches representing their original beds.

One of the most remarkable features of all parts of Flanders is the sub-surface water, which, always fairly high, rises considerably as autumn progresses; any excavation or depression, whether natural feature, ditch, trench or crater, soon fills with water and its sides then fall in; whilst the surface of the ground is rapidly churned by traffic into the consistency of cream cheese. Troops on the portion of the plain nearest the coast, at any rate in winter, are, unless there is a heavy frost, practically confined to the roads. Much of the ground adjoining the rivers and canals is of the same character as the coast zone. The remainder of the plain and the low hills differ from it in that they are well cultivated and dotted with tiny villages, isolated houses and woods. The fields are small, often divided by hedgerows with many trees in them. In the autumn of 1914, when the British arrived and before the breath of war had passed over the land, there was much to remind them of the scenery of the Weald of Kent as they looked down from Mount Kemmel and Messines ridge over a green, fertile, but blind country. It was bad for infantry, almost impossible for mounted action and very difficult for artillery, except where high ground or buildings

<sup>1</sup> For more detailed description of the ridge east of Ypres, see Chap. V.



provided positions for observation posts, though even from these the view was generally limited by trees.

Between Lens and Béthune, south of the La Bassée Canal, lay a coal mining area, with the usual accompaniments of high conical slag-heaps, pit-heads (fosses) and terraces of workmen's dwellings (corons). Many of the II. Corps, as they topped the ridge on the march from St. Pol to Béthune, and suddenly came in sight of the "Black Country" lying before them, felt their hearts sink at the prospect of more fighting among slag-heaps such as they had seen at Mons. It came as a real damper to their spirits, which had been greatly raised by the delightful march from the Aisne, the railway journey, and the charming country they had come through after leaving Abbeville.

The three towns of Lille—Tourecoing—Roubaix form a great manufacturing district and one huge area of houses; and there were some smaller centres of industry, such as Armentières, Comines, Halluin, Menin, all on the Lys; various isolated sugar and alcohol factories; and the steel works at Isbergues (near Aire). Otherwise Flanders was a country of old and decaying towns and prosperous villages, a highly cultivated agricultural area, in which beetroot for sugar and alcohol, hops, corn, tobacco, fodder and vegetables formed the principal crops. The tobacco provided unexpected assistance to the artillery; for in autumn the plants, hanging downwards in sheds to dry, formed invaluable screens for observers, who could see through them, but were themselves quite invisible as long as they did not move. A little later in the year the removal, customary at that season, of the tobacco and beetroot to factories in enormous wains, at times completely blocked the roads for traffic and thereby caused most serious inconvenience to the Army. Though there were some good farms—the size of the accumulation of manure in the central court being the index of prosperity—the great majority of buildings in which troops had to be billeted were squalid sheds, often with but one brick and three wattle and plaster walls. The water-courses and wells were contaminated by the manure heaps close by, the odour of which contended for the mastery with the sickly smell of refuse beetroot, preserved for winter cattle food; and in most of the villages there was endemic disease.

The main roads in the portion of Flanders that lay in France were wide, but with little bottom and quite unfit, as a rule, for heavy traffic, especially for 3-ton motor lorries.



French practice in peace time was to spare them by the simple process of closing them to heavy vehicles during a thaw; but mere posters with the mystic words "Barrières fermées," even if they had been understood, could not deter the British from using them at such times. The side roads were mud tracks. In Belgium and in the frontier district in France many of the roads were paved with granite setts (pavé), but only for the width of a single pair of wheels, and on each side of this was a mud track which became a quagmire in winter. Thus, the roads were quite unsuited to the service of a large army, whilst in wet weather to ride, or indeed walk, on the fields alongside them was like plunging into a bog. The state of the communications soon became an urgent problem and absorbed much of the very sparse labour available.

#### THE PLAN OF ADVANCE

10 Oct.  
Map 6.  
Sketch 3.

On the 10th October a conference between General Foch<sup>1</sup> and Sir John French took place at the former's headquarters in Doullens, and it was then agreed that the French and British troops in the north should endeavour to make a combined advance eastward, the B.E.F. passing to the north of Lille. Accordingly, on the evening of the 11th, the British Commander-in-Chief ordered<sup>2</sup> the march of the II. Corps and the cavalry to be continued next day without waiting for the III. Corps to get up into line: the II. Corps to the line Lorgies (2 miles north of La Bassée)—Estaires, and the Cavalry Corps on its left to the high ground near Mont Noir and Mont des Cats.<sup>3</sup> The III. Corps, for which the French were to provide motor bus transport, was to secure Hazebrouck. As the enemy's cavalry appeared to be falling back, there was every prospect of a comparatively easy advance.

The narrative of events leading up to the first battle of Ypres involves a large number of troops scattered over seventy miles of front. It may be as well therefore, as preface, to point out briefly the essential features of the operations. The French left flank remained during this period practically stationary near Vermelles, south-east

<sup>1</sup> His position at this time was "délégué du général en chef"; on the 11th October he became Commandant le Groupe des Armées du Nord (G.A.N.).

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 13.

<sup>3</sup> This name puzzled the British Army. It was ascertained that "Cat" is the old Burgundian form of "Chat", just as Cateau is of Chateau.

of Béthune. Pivoting on this flank, the Allied line swung 11 Oct. forward, and the left of the British II. Corps, in front of Béthune, made good progress; whilst further north, in front of Armentières, the III. Corps—Conneau's and de Mitry's cavalry corps filling the gap between it and the II.—nearly reached the western defences of Lille. North of this again, Allenby's cavalry corps secured Messines and Wytshaete ridges, thus connecting with Sir H. Rawlinson's force in front of Ypres, and through it with the Belgian Army and French troops along the Yser. Thus, a complete though thin line of alternate infantry and cavalry corps was established to the sea. All efforts to advance east of this, however, failed; for simultaneously with the Allied movements to Flanders, the Germans also shifted forces to the north, and brought up not only the troops released by the fall of Antwerp but four newly organized corps, which they hurried forward to turn the Allied flank and reach the Channel ports.

#### 11TH-20TH OCTOBER

#### THE ATTEMPT OF THE II. CORPS TO TURN THE GERMAN NORTHERN FLANK

#### THE BATTLE OF LA BASSÉE <sup>1</sup>

On the afternoon of the 11th October the French left Map 7. was still at Vermelles, some four miles south of the La Sketches Bassée Canal. As it was being attacked, and there seemed 3 and B no hope of it extending northward, Sir H. Smith-Dorrien (end ordered a battalion—the 1/Norfolk of the 15th Brigade paper). was selected—to be sent south-east from Béthune to Annequin, between Vermelles and the canal, there to entrench and cover the gap, where, by good luck, marshy ground restricted the front exposed to attack. At the same time he placed his corps reserve, the 13th Brigade, between the 1/Norfolk and Béthune, in order to be in a position to render assistance should it be required.

Early on the morning of the 12th came the bad news 12 Oct. that the French XXI. Corps had lost Vermelles. The commander of the II. Corps had therefore to consider whether he should take the whole of his troops north of the canal and move north-eastwards, as definitely ordered by G.H.Q., leaving in the Allied line a gap which would

<sup>1</sup> The official date of this battle is 10th October-2nd November 1914.

increase as he advanced ; or would obey the conflicting instruction that his right should remain in touch with the left of the French. He decided for the latter course, and issued fresh orders for his divisions to advance east instead of north-east, as this seemed the best way to assist General Maud'huy. He directed :

The 5th Division—leaving the 13th Brigade (Br.-General W. B. Hickie) south of the canal to connect with French XXI. Corps—to the line Givenchy—Richebourg l'Avoué. It moved with the 15th Brigade (Br.-General Count Gleichen) on the right and the 14th (Br.-General S. P. Rolt on the left).

The 3rd Division north of it to Richebourg St. Vaast—Pont du Hem (6 miles north of the canal). It marched with the 9th Brigade (Br.-General F. C. Shaw) on the right, the 8th Brigade (Br.-General B. J. C. Doran) on the left, and the 7th slightly in rear in the centre.

The 3rd Division was warned that it might be required to wheel south-east to assist the advance of the 5th.

As the British advanced guards moved forward, Conneau's cavalry corps, which had been covering the II. Corps north of the canal, retired, and moved away to its left flank to concentrate at Lestrem (3 miles south-east of Merville). It came almost as a shock to the II. Corps to find the French still in their blue and red uniforms, and to see cuirassier regiments, with their toy carbines,<sup>1</sup> still in breast-plates—those of the officers shining with the burnish of nickel or silver plate, the men's dirty and rusty.

The French horse artillery remained in action for some little time longer, blazing away merrily ; but when the British gunners came up they could find nothing to shoot at and, after the stolid British custom, did not open fire. Twitted by the infantry for this inactivity, they visited their French comrades, only to learn that they had no targets and had been merely "watering" the countryside at intervals to keep the infantry in good heart.

The country ahead of the II. Corps was extremely difficult—flat, except for an occasional swell of a few feet, on which the farms and buildings were placed, and for a low ridge, ten miles east of Béthune, extending from Pérenchies (between Armentières and Lille) south-eastwards to within four miles of La Bassée. This ridge had an outlying feature at its southern end, later known as Aubers ridge, which in October was so screened by trees

<sup>1</sup> The British cavalry carried the same short rifle as the infantry.



in the hedgerows as to be almost invisible. Much of the ground was little better than a morass, intersected by hedgerows and by deep and muddy dykes and streams, impassable except by bridging. The movement of artillery was impracticable except on the roads, though in compensation the pollard willows along the banks of the ditches were often convenient for hiding guns. It was dismal country to work over and depressing to dwell in. And it was to become worse. As trenches were dug and breastworks were thrown up, the natural drainage channels were blocked or interfered with, and the whole area, as winter progressed, became hopelessly water-logged, a condition that was not in any degree remedied until the following winter, and never completely overcome. Artillery observation seemed at first to present great difficulties, except on the south bank of the canal where there were slag-heaps on which French and British observing stations, scratched in the slopes, were crowded together "like stone-martens' nests". When there were factories and houses they were made use of, for neither side had sufficient ammunition to knock down conspicuous buildings likely to be useful to the enemy. For the first time artillery officers were seen looking like chimney sweeps, as a result of climbing up the inside of the tall chimney of a brewery. Church towers were also used, but were mostly too far away or too heavily shelled to be serviceable.

The Germans, although they did not appear to be in great strength, and consisted, as it was subsequently learnt, of our old antagonists of the Marne, the *I. and II. Cavalry Corps*, with their usual support of *Jäger*, infantry and cyclist battalions, disputed every building, every water-course and every hedge. The *Guard Cavalry Division*, opponents of the *II. Corps* at the passage of the Aisne, had secured La Bassée the previous day and were attempting to advance from it; whilst north of it were the *4th, 7th and 9th Cavalry Divisions*,<sup>1</sup> the last at Fosse (6 miles N.N.E. of Béthune). The *IV. Cavalry Corps* was northward of the front of the *II. Corps*.

Thus north of the canal, five infantry brigades of the

<sup>1</sup> In addition, there were five *Jäger* battalions, two battalions of the *112th Infantry Regiment* and Trotha's composite brigade of the *XIV. Corps*. (See Poseck, pp. 167-178.) The *Ulan* brigade of the *Guard Cavalry Division* moved on Festubert, the *Cuirassier* brigade on Givenchy, and the *Dragoon* brigade, supported by the heavy guns of the *XIV. Corps* and parts of the *23rd Division*, south of the canal, on Cuinchy and Auchy. Vogel, pp. 196-201. Poseck, p. 171.



II. Corps were opposed by four cavalry divisions, supported by more battalions than made up two British infantry brigades.

In spite of this resistance and one determined counter-attack—made against the junction of the two British divisions and repelled by the 1/East Surrey (14th Brigade)—progress was made on an eight mile front, particularly in a general attack at 3 P.M. timed to synchronize with one by the French XXI. Corps, which did not however take place. The Germans again counter-attacked near Givenchy, but were repelled, Major R. T. Roper, second in command of the Dorsets and a very accomplished staff officer, being killed in this fighting about 4.30 P.M.

Advancing mainly in long continuous extended lines, in order to cover the front, by evening the II. Corps had reached Givenchy—a straggling village on a slight rise, with a conspicuous church tower—and elsewhere, north of the canal, was very little short of its objectives. The general line, which was at once entrenched, was Noyelles (just west of Vermelles)—Givenchy—Rue des Chavattes (one mile south-west of Richebourg St. Vaast)—Lacouture—Fosse, the 13th Brigade, which repulsed a counter-attack, still being south of the canal. The troops slept on the ground where they happened to be, and this henceforward became the ordinary course of life, blankets being issued on the 15th. The casualties on the 12th were about two hundred.

13 Oct.  
Map 7.  
Sketch  
B.

The 13th October was a day of heavy fighting for the II. Corps, but with very little concrete result, and at one time the 15th Brigade at Givenchy was in a critical position. Sir John French approved of General Smith-Dorrien's endeavour to free the left of the French XXI. Corps, and directed the III. Corps, then about to advance from Hazebrouck, to render the II. Corps assistance if required. He ordered the advance north-eastwards to be resumed as soon as possible, provided the French were in a position to join in.<sup>1</sup> South of the canal, the French closed up to the right of the 13th Brigade, but no advance was made.<sup>2</sup>

North of the canal, in the early morning of a dull day which turned in the afternoon to heavy rain, the Germans began a severe bombardment of Givenchy. The 15th

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 14.

<sup>2</sup> Br.-General Hickie was placed on the sick list this day and command of the 13th Brigade was taken over by Lieut.-Colonel A. Martyn, The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

Brigade held the village with two companies of the Bedfordshire, with the Dorsets on the right between them and the canal. Givenchy was soon in flames, but the struggle continued until well on into the afternoon, the Bedfordshire holding one end of the village and the enemy the other, when the former had at last to draw back, with a loss of 149 of all ranks. The Dorsets had managed to advance, but their left and rear were exposed when Givenchy was lost. The enemy, taking advantage of this, attacked, and assisted by enfilade fire from machine guns on the railway embankment south of the canal—where the Dorsets thought the 13th Brigade to be—brought fire to bear from all sides. The battalion was forced to retire, losing Lieut.-Colonel L. J. Bols, wounded, and four hundred casualties, of whom 130 were killed.<sup>1</sup> A section of the 11th Battery R.F.A. with them, had every man wounded and was unable to bring away its guns; another section of the same battery, actually in Givenchy village, fired to the last moment but got clear. The Dorsets went back four or five hundred yards to a position abreast of the canal bridge known as Pont Fixe, rallying on two companies of the Devons, the divisional reserve, whilst the Bedfordshire withdrew to the road running north from this bridge to Festubert. From this new line the enemy failed to dislodge the British.<sup>2</sup> Northwards a successful advance of the 14th Brigade came quickly to an end, as, soon after 3 P.M., it was ordered to send the two companies of the Devons, in brigade reserve, towards the 15th Brigade. The attack of the 3rd Division in co-operation with the French 7th Cavalry Division had made little progress, as the slow advance of the latter exposed the 8th Brigade to counter-attack. The casualties of the II. Corps for the 13th were very nearly a thousand.

<sup>1</sup> The diaries of both 15th Brigade and 1/Dorsetshire state that a number of Germans surrendered, or pretended to surrender, by holding their hands up, and that others thereupon opened fire and caught our men unawares. There is nothing however to prove collusion between the two parties.

<sup>2</sup> The German account of this action is that bombardment was commenced at daybreak, but the *Garde Jäger* and *Garde Kürassier*, supported by the *3rd Guard Cavalry (Dragoon) Brigade*, which came up from La Bassée, could make no progress. At 6.30 A.M. a heavy howitzer battery of the *28th Division* began to enfilade the British line from south of the canal. At 2 P.M. the *Cavalry Corps* reserve and the *114th Infantry Regiment* were brought up and a general assault was made which resulted in the capture of Givenchy (Vogel, pp. 201-2). The presence of the whole of Trotha's composite brigade of the *XIV. Corps*, to which the *114th Infantry Regiment* belonged, is mentioned in "S. und G.", p. 46.

Owing to the wide front occupied, the misty weather and the intricate nature of the country, centralized control of the divisional artilleries had become impossible, and the bulk of field artillery was allotted to the infantry brigades, usually an artillery brigade, with a field howitzer battery added, to each of them. During the first period, whilst the infantry was advancing, sections of guns were attached to battalions and went forward with them—we have just had an instance of this in the sections employed in and near Givenchy—but, when the infantry began to dig in, the batteries were re-formed and put into position about 1,000 to 1,500 yards behind the front line. The allotment was varied to suit the fluctuations of the action, and arrangements for combining or crossing the fire of the guns attached to different brigades remained in the hands of the divisional artillery commanders.

14 Oct.  
Map 7.  
Sketches  
3 and B.

During the 14th and 15th the II. Corps had continuous fighting on both sides of the canal, with losses of 967, and, as henceforward became habitual, the enemy made attacks each night. Whether these were intended to be serious or were merely for the purpose of wearing out the British it was impossible to discover. The two brigades of the 5th Division north of the canal were unable to make any progress, but on both flanks of the II. Corps, in conjunction with the French, a certain advance was made. South of the canal, on the 14th October, the 13th Brigade lay in front of Cuinchy, abreast of Givenchy; the Germans there contented themselves with heavy fire and only made one attack, after dark, when, according to the war diary of the 2/King's Own Scottish Borderers, about six hundred Germans cheered and about sixty charged, to be mown down almost to a man. During the 14th the Commander-in-Chief visited the II. Corps to see the conditions under which it was fighting; and, as a result, it was arranged that the French should that night take over from the 13th Brigade, which then rejoined its division on the north side of the canal. The relief was completed at 2.30 A.M.

The 3rd Division, the left of the II. Corps, suffered a heavy loss on the 14th in the death of its commander, Major-General Hubert Hamilton, Lord Kitchener's Military Secretary in South Africa and India, who had inspired all under him with the utmost confidence. He was killed by a shrapnel bullet about 10 A.M. near Bout Deville (about two miles south of Estaires). But this loss was far from discouraging to his division; though it made little progress

XIX

XIX







on the 14th, owing to determined resistance from *Jäger* 15 Oct. and dismounted cavalry ensconced in houses. On the 15th,<sup>1</sup> with guns disposed amongst the infantry right up in the firing line, it drove the enemy from one entrenched position and loopholed village to another. Crossing the dykes with planks, the brigades forced him off the La Bassée—Estaires road and established themselves on the line Richebourg St. Vaast—Croix Barbée—Pont du Hem, their objective of the 12th. The II. Corps line thus ran due north from near Givenchy to Pont du Hem, but it had taken four days for the left, the wheeling flank, to get forward six miles. The total casualties of the corps amounted to nearly two thousand, of whom, owing to the nature of the country, which necessitated fighting in small detachments, ninety were officers. A great number of dead Germans were found throughout the advance.

During the evening of the 15th October information of the probable withdrawal of the German cavalry, but not of its relief by infantry, reached Sir H. Smith-Dorrien.<sup>2</sup> He hoped now to be able to push forward north-eastwards, drawing towards the III. Corps, as suggested by G.H.Q. in instructions issued at 1.40 P.M.<sup>3</sup> But this was found impracticable, as the French XXI. Corps could not spare troops to man the trenches which would be vacated by the right of the II. Corps. General Smith-Dorrien therefore ordered the II. Corps to wheel south-eastwards to outflank the enemy who was attacking the French.

This course was approved by Sir John French, but he reiterated that the II. Corps should close northwards to the III. Corps as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup> During the day General Foch proposed in writing to him, as an insurance against eventualities, the preparation of a defensive posi-

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Colin J. Mackenzie assumed command of the 3rd Division this day. He was invalided on the 29th October. Major-General F. D. V. Wing then took command temporarily until 22nd November, when Major-General J. A. L. Haldane became commander.

<sup>2</sup> On the night of the 15th/16th the relief of the German *Guard Cavalry Division* at Givenchy and the *4th Cavalry Division* immediately north of it, both of the *I. Cavalry Corps*, was begun by the *14th Division (VII. Corps)*, which had left the Aisne on the 8th October. The relief of the *II. Cavalry Corps* was commenced at the same time by the *13th Division (VII. Corps)*. Both German cavalry corps then went into reserve near Lille. The *13th Division's* front extended from Aubers to near Armentières. Beyond the *VII. Corps*, the *XIX.* and *XIII. Corps* moved up to the line Houplines—Menin. Bülow, p. 84. Vogel, p. 204. Poseek, pp. 177-8.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 19.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 20. On the 17th and 18th, Sir J. French definitely ordered the II. Corps to take La Bassée, see Appendices 21 and 23.

tion along the Béthune—Aire—St. Omer canal. This was gradually taken in hand by Br.-General G. H. Fowke, the Engineer-in-Chief, the French lending several Territorial battalions to assist. As the canal was badly overlooked by high ground on the northern side, a more suitable line was selected from Mt. Bernenchon (4 miles north-west of Béthune) westwards, and traced in front of St. Venant, through the Forests of Nieppe and Clairmarais (east of St. Omer) to the hill east of Watten (6 miles north of St. Omer), where it joined on to trenches constructed for the defence of Dunkirk.

16 Oct.  
Map 8.  
Sketch 5.

During the following three days, the 16th to 18th October, the II. Corps, losing nearly a thousand men, made good progress, and in spite of the enemy continuing to dispute every ditch and bridge, it swung forward forty-five degrees south-eastward, pivoting on its right near Givenchy, so that its left arrived in front of Aubers. But from the 18th onwards it encountered increased resistance as the German *XIII. Corps* came up to the assistance of the *VII. Corps* and allowed the latter to shorten its front from fifteen miles to ten, and the II. Corps was gradually brought to a standstill.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the support on its left was reduced by four out of the seven French cavalry divisions being ordered to Ypres.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Givenchy was retaken on the 16th by the 15th Brigade and, on the following day, though his right was held up by enfilade fire from across the canal, Br.-General Count Gleichen made a substantial advance, the Norfolks reaching Canteleux, half-way between Givenchy and La Bassée, and the Cheshire at 4 p.m. securing Violaines, still further to the east and only a mile north-west of La Bassée. On the 17th, too, the 9th Brigade got a footing on Aubers Ridge, attacking and capturing Aubers and Herlies, the latter at the point of the bayonet just as

<sup>1</sup> The *XIII. Corps* (26th Division and 25th Reserve Division) had arrived on the Lys on the 14th and entrenched a position from Halluin southwards to cover the German northern flank. On the night of the 18th/19th October (it is stated) it was relieved by four cavalry divisions and marched through Lille south-westwards. On the 20th it attacked, as will be seen later, against Ennetières (6 miles west of Lille)—Le Maisnil with the 25th Reserve Division, the 14th Infantry Division (*VII. Corps*) being on its left. Fromelles formed the boundary between the *VII.* and *XIII. Corps* and was in the area of the former. As wounded of the 13th Division were found in front of Givenchy on the 18th, part of the relief must have taken place earlier than the night of the 18th/19th. "Regt. No. 122", pp. 32-4 and map.

<sup>2</sup> The 7th Cavalry Division left on the 15th, and was followed next day by de Mitry's corps, leaving only three cavalry divisions of General Conneau's corps between the British II. and III. Corps.



darkness fell by a brilliant charge of the 1/Lincolnshire Regiment. Prisoners were taken on this front of the 56th Regiment (14th Division), the first identification of the VII. Corps. The 7th Brigade, now in the line, was unable either on this day or the next to secure Illies and, in consequence, the 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers of the 9th Brigade, which was supporting its attack on the left and had made some progress, was brought back at night on the 18th, so that it should not be exposed alone. The French cavalry on the left of the corps, helped by the 2/Royal Irish Regiment, captured Fromelles and fifty prisoners; but its failure to get up into the general line reacted right down the 3rd Division front. On the 18th<sup>1</sup> a French battalion<sup>2</sup> and the Devons, lent to the 15th by the 14th Brigade, succeeded in getting abreast of and taking the canal bridge three-quarters of a mile east of Givenchy. The high-water mark of the offensive, however, had been reached, and the 15th Brigade was nearer to La Bassée than any British troops were to be for four years. Further progress on the north bank of the canal was stopped by enfilade fire from a fortified post among the brick-stacks south of the triangle (known as the Railway Triangle) on the other bank formed by the railway lines east of Cuinchy, and from a factory behind it which resisted all bombardments. That the Germans had received important reinforcements became more and more obvious. On the 19th, however, the 2/Royal Irish (8th Brigade)—again working in co-operation with the French cavalry which was simultaneously to move on Fournes—in a most gallant attack in which it lost over two hundred men, took Le Pilly, a village on Aubers Ridge between Herlies and Fournes and overlooked by both of them. The French, although the capture of Fournes was several times reported, never reached their objective, but, there being a doubt, the Irishmen were left holding their conquest. In the early morning of the 20th, before the orders issued for the retirement of the 2/Royal Irish reached the battalion, the Germans discovered that it was isolated and, after heavy bombardment, sent battalions of the 16th and 56th Regi-

17-19  
Oct.

Map 9.

<sup>1</sup> Major-General T. L. N. Morland, on this day, took over command of the 5th Division from Sir Charles Fergusson, promoted Lieutenant-General.

<sup>2</sup> The 6th Battalion of the 295th Infantry Regiment (Commandant d'Oullembourg), with a section of machine guns and a squadron of the 4th Chasseurs, all of the 58th Reserve Division. This French detachment gradually grew into a group in the succeeding days and was not finally relieved by the British until 10/11 December.



ments (*14th Division*) to attack and surround Le Pilly.<sup>1</sup> After a fight lasting until 3 P.M., some three hundred survivors of the Royal Irish, nearly all wounded, were forced to surrender. The battalion commander, Major E. H. E. Daniell, D.S.O., was amongst the killed. The total losses of the battalion in killed and prisoners in the two days' fighting were 17 officers and 561 other ranks. Thirty other ranks, only, escaped from Le Pilly to the British lines.

20 Oct.

The position of the II. Corps was becoming increasingly difficult; it now had two fresh German divisions against it, which on the 20th were obviously in fighting mood and soon developed attacks all along the line, the beginning of a great offensive, of which the operations against the II. Corps only formed a part.<sup>2</sup> As the wheel of the II. Corps to the right, made in order to assist the French XXI. Corps, progressed, its outer flank, as the disaster to the Royal Irish accentuated, became more and more exposed. The two divisional cavalry squadrons of the 3rd and 5th Divisions and the 4/Middlesex, which were guarding the left flank, though supported by the French I. Cavalry Corps, were not always able to maintain their position. The turning point in the story of the attempt of the II. Corps to take La Bassée had been reached. Its steady though slow progress came to a stop, and its strategic position became untenable. The continuous fighting, too, was beginning to tell on the men. All along the line the infantry, harassed by continual petty night attacks, could get no rest day or night, and as all the field guns were utilized to assist in repelling these efforts on the part of the enemy, the artillery was in little better case. Many of the infantry dropped asleep in action over their rifles; nevertheless, weak in body and in numbers, they seemed to revive by some special inspiration when the enemy endeavoured to push his way forward. It was hoped that the advance of the III. Corps further to the north would ease the situation; but though the 19th Brigade was sent on the 20th from G.H.Q. reserve to Fromelles to support the left of the II. Corps—it was withdrawn again on the 22nd—the arrival of the German *XIX.* and *XIII. Corps*

<sup>1</sup> Statement of a prisoner officer of the *56th Infantry Regiment*.

<sup>2</sup> The new divisions were the *13th* and *14th* of the *VII. Corps*. A general offensive of the German *Sixth* and *Fourth Armies* from Arras to the sea was ordered to begin on the 20th October. "Ypres", pp. 26 and 59. Poseck, pp. 191-2. The German plan will be found in a Note at the end of, and the attack on the III. and IV. Corps and Cavalry Corps in, Chapter V.

had turned the balance too decisively to the other side. **20 Oct.** Late on the 20th October Sir John French decided to abandon the attempt to envelop the enemy at La Bassée and issued orders<sup>1</sup> by which, whilst the rest of his forces held their ground, the I. Corps, then arriving at Ypres, was to carry out the turning movement and the envelopment of the German northern flank, which had been attempted in turn by so many corps all the way from Soissons to Armentières. The II. Corps therefore stood fast on the line :—bridge on the canal three-quarters of a mile in front of Givenchy—Violaines—west end of Illies—east end of Herlies—Riez.

### 21ST OCTOBER

#### THE ATTACK ON THE 3RD DIVISION

The halt was singularly opportune, for the enemy **21 Oct.** counter-offensive begun on the 20th, which—apart from the surrounding of the Royal Irish at Le Pilly—seems on that day to have been chiefly pressed against the French XXI. Corps, became very marked on the 21st against the British 3rd Division, the left of the II. Corps line. The brigades of this corps stood from right to left in the order 15th, 13th, 14th, 7th, 9th and 8th.<sup>2</sup> About 7 A.M. on the 21st, under cover of the mist, the Germans attacked, particularly the front of the 7th and 9th Brigades, between Le Transloy and Herlies. They surprised the left company of the 2/S. Lancashire (the right of the 7th Brigade), and having thus made an entry forced back the rest of the battalion and two companies of the 3/Worcestershire on its left. They then endeavoured to extend the gap; but the troops on its flanks—on the south the 1/Cornwall L.I. (14th Brigade), and on the north a company of the Worcestershire, with the battalion machine guns, the 1/Wiltshire and 2/Royal Irish Rifles—held on unflinchingly. Against the 9th Brigade, though they shelled it heavily, the Germans made no serious infantry attack; they seem to have directed all available reinforcements towards the gap that they had made, and the 1/Cheshire (15th Brigade) in Violaines had splendid targets in infantry that was moving northwards across its front towards Le Transloy.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 28.

<sup>2</sup> Several battalions were not with their own brigades.

The progress of the Germans was soon limited. A company of the 3/Worcestershire and the 7th Brigade Signal Section blocked their way and shot the invaders down at fifty to one hundred yards range as they came on, disorganized and wandering, apparently lost in the mist. On the right two companies of the 1/East Surrey came up and filled part of the gap. From the divisional reserve the 1/Royal West Kent was despatched in support, and as the light improved the 41st Battery and a section of howitzers of the 128th Battery gave most effective assistance, mowing down the Germans as they fled over some open plough.

Towards 11 A.M. a counter-attack was made by the two companies of the 3/Worcestershire and a company of the 1/West Kent, and the line re-established, although all the trenches of the South Lancashire were not recovered.

The situation remained an anxious one throughout the afternoon, as there were practically no reserves. Nevertheless, the attacks made by the enemy—feebly about 2.30 P.M., and in greater strength about 4 P.M., as it became dusk, when the 1/Cornwall L.I. (which had all its officers killed or wounded) was hard pressed—were repulsed. In these attempts three regiments of the German *14th Division*, that is three-quarters of its infantry, and one of the *13th Division*, were identified.

About 6.30 P.M., after news had been received of the retirement of the 19th Brigade on the north of him from Le Maisnil, Major-General Mackenzie ordered the retirement of the 3rd Division to a line Lorgies—Ligny—south of Fromelles, there being French cavalry in the last-named village. This meant giving up Herlies and Grand Riez, and abandoning ground averaging a mile in depth—less on the right, more on the left—but it got rid of the flank facing north-east, held by the 8th Brigade, from Grand Riez to near Fromelles. Towards 8 P.M. the left of the 14th Brigade conformed and joined on to the 3rd Division south of Lorgies.

During the 21st, the 1/Cornwall L.I. lost in casualties 8 officers and 258 other ranks; the 3/Worcestershire, 7 officers and 76 other ranks; the 2/S. Lancashire, 7 officers and over two hundred other ranks; and the total of the II. Corps for the day was 1,079.



22 Oct.

22ND OCTOBER

## THE WHEEL BACK OF THE LEFT OF THE II. CORPS

In view of the weakness and exposure of his left flank and the possibility of its being enveloped, Sir H. Smith-Dorrien had already set about entrenching a reserve line traced to meet such a contingency. This line, whilst only involving a very slight retirement on the right, allowed of the left being drawn back about two miles, and ran from the east side of Givenchy by the east side of Neuve Chapelle to Fauquissart, and its general direction was thus a little east of north. It was strong only as regards its siting: such wire as there was had been taken from the fences of the fields and the water-logged nature of the ground prevented the excavation of shell-proof dug-outs. Constructed by the engineers of the two divisions with working parties of local civilians, instead of tired-out infantry, it was a far better position than any front line trenches or breastworks dug at hazard in the dark wherever the troops happened to have settled down at the close of an engagement; and it became, practically unchanged, the British front line for four long years.

Map 9.  
Sketch 5.

When, therefore, on the 22nd the II. Corps left was exposed by the French cavalry north of it being driven out of Fromelles, General Smith-Dorrien, after obtaining the consent of Sir John French, ordered a retirement to the reserve line on the night of the 22nd/23rd October. To assist the operation G.H.Q. ordered all that was available of the Lahore Division,<sup>1</sup> under Lieut.-General Watkis to Estaires as a support, on the II. Corps left rear, to Conneau's cavalry corps. The Jullundur Brigade arrived there on the 23rd, and the divisional troops next day.

The withdrawal of the II. Corps was none too soon; for on the early morning of the 22nd the Cheshire had been attacked at Violaines, where they held a curved line on the eastern side of the village, and were driven from it with the loss of over two hundred men. In view of its exposure to envelopment the divisional commander had proposed a withdrawal soon after Violaines had been captured five days previously, but the officer commanding the

<sup>1</sup> The Sirhind Brigade was still in Egypt and the Ferozepore Brigade had been sent north to assist the Cavalry Corps. See Chap. VIII. and Note on p. 92.



Cheshire had pleaded successfully to be allowed to retain the ground he had won. Reinforcements were brought up by Count Gleichen, but the Germans made no attempt to exploit their gain, although they continued to press the whole front of the 5th Division, and made a half-hearted attack about 2 P.M. against the 9th Brigade. The retirement of the II. Corps on the night of the 22/23rd to the new line was carried out without the slightest interference, though next day at least one German regiment<sup>1</sup> stormed the villages that had been abandoned.

The most important point in these first days' fighting in Flanders was the establishment of that close liaison with the French which was to have such wonderful results. During the retreat to the Seine and at the Marne and the Aisne, very few British soldiers, or even regimental officers, saw many French soldiers—and those only of Reserve divisions or coloured units—or heard of what they were doing. There grew up a very general feeling that the British were being left to do all the fighting, and very bitter remarks about our Allies were often heard. The fighting between Vermelles and Givenchy in October soon dissipated all notions of this kind, even before the great welding of the two Armies later in the month in the long and fiery ordeal of the Battles of Ypres. The two Allied corps nearest La Bassée were together in a very desperate situation and helped each other every day. British troops were sent south of the canal when the French left was threatened; the French sent troops north of the canal to fill the gap in our line when the British were in difficulties.<sup>2</sup> Our men saw with their own eyes the gallantry of the French infantry in attack: the French saw the tenacity of our defence. Some of our battalions were actually under the orders of French brigade commanders at times, and vice versa; guns were lent to our Allies, and the French artillery reciprocated. Thus on the 14th October, the 65th Field Howitzer Battery was sent to Annequin to support the French attack on Vermelles, for our Allies had no field howitzers or heavy guns and the 75's were useless against buildings. This battery supported the French attacks on Cuinchy and Auchy on the 16th to 19th and, with the 2nd Siege Battery, the 58th French Division in

<sup>1</sup> The regimental history of the German *Infantry Regiment No. 121 (26th Division)*, p. 17, states that Fromelles was stormed in the early morning of the 23rd October and found empty. The companies then suffered "very much" from artillery fire.

<sup>2</sup> See General de Maud'huy's letter at end of this Chapter, p. 92.

its attack on Vermelles from 20th to 22nd October; whilst 22 Oct. a groupe of French 75-mm. batteries (the 24th, 25th and 26th of the 1st Regiment of Field Artillery) was placed under the orders of the British 5th Division on the 25th and 26th October for some hours. Our battery commanders and the French shared the same observing stations and, generally speaking, they got to know each other. It is not without historical interest to recall that Br.-General Headlam, commanding the 5th Divisional Artillery, had several discussions at the time with General Maistre, commanding XXI. Corps, on the use of artillery in the support of infantry. It was the French custom for the guns to cease fire at the moment the infantry went "over the top", which, of course, was taken as a signal by the Germans to man their parapets. The British system was what came afterwards to be called a "barrage"; but General Maistre said he could not trust the accuracy of his artillery fire sufficiently to allow his infantry to advance under it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following message was received by the 5th Division from the II. Corps headquarters:—

"G. 37, 14th [October 1914]. General Maistre commanding XXI. Corps has visited the corps commander and expressed to him personally his gratitude for the assistance rendered to him to-day by the heavy battery of the 5th Division and his admiration for their accurate shooting which without endangering the advance of the French troops assisted them by fire directed only a short distance in front of them to gain considerable ground. He informed the corps commander that according to reports given by his own staff officers, our artillery fire had been distinctly more effective than his own. The corps commander is extremely pleased with this high compliment and desires that you will convey this information and his own compliments to the battery."

The use of the French word "barrage" has tended to conceal the origin of the system. The support of the infantry attacks by covering fire as laid down before the war in "Field Artillery Training" [Edition of April 1914] paras. 155-7 was a "barrage", but with the difference that no one contemplated an ammunition supply which would enable fire to be continued without intermission for long periods of time. The covering fire was therefore arrived at by "bursts" during which the infantry made their "rushes". There were many hot discussions in pre-war days of how close to the infantry the guns might keep their fire and whether the infantry was prepared to run the risk of some losses from "shorts" for the sake of being covered by fire to the last moment. The following extract is from a 5th Divisional Artillery memorandum of 16th January 1915, recommending a particular point of attack mainly because the artillery commanders would "be able to see the ground over which the infantry is advancing . . . for it is only then that the fire can with safety be directed on the point of attack until the infantry are within assaulting distance and can then be moved forward, *pari passu* with the infantry advance, establishing a belt of fire through which it should be impossible for any counter-attack to penetrate".

The narrative of the operations of the II. Corps is continued in Chapter VII.

## NOTE I.

## THE INDIAN CORPS

The two divisions into which the Indian Corps was organized were, to avoid confusion of numbers, called the Lahore Division and the Meerut Division: their six brigades, which also bore Indian names, each contained one British and three Indian battalions. The battalions were all of them weak, the majority being little over eight hundred strong, and many of them little over seven hundred. To attain even this strength some of the Indian battalions had been obliged to draw heavily upon their linked battalions. There was also a cavalry brigade, composed of one British and two Indian regiments, with one battery of horse artillery.

The troops were embarked at Karachi and Bombay during the last week of August and the first fortnight of September. The Lahore Division, after a short detention in Egypt, reached Marseilles on the 26th September, less one infantry brigade—the Sirhind—which was left temporarily in Egypt. The Meerut Division and the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade did not sail from India until the third week of September, nor reach Marseilles until the 12th-14th October. The arrangements for despatching the troops were disturbed by the raids of the German cruisers *Emden* and *Königsberg*; and their voyage was protracted by the low speed of some of the transports, which could not steam more than seven knots an hour. There was further delay at Marseilles, whilst the Indian troops were re-armed with the latest pattern rifle, and yet more at the place of concentration at Orleans, whilst the Train was reorganized. As General Service wagons were not available, tradesmen's vans had to be procured locally. Lastly the Indian divisions had not a single howitzer, and did not receive their heavy batteries—and those only 4·7 inch—from Woolwich until their arrival in France. Various causes thus conspired to make the force later than had been expected in its arrival at the front.

## NOTE II.

LETTER FROM GENERAL DE MAUD'HUY, COMMANDING THE FRENCH TENTH ARMY TO THE G.O.C. II. CORPS

*Translation*

From General de Maud'huy  
Commanding X Army

To the General Commanding the British II. Army Corps.

26th October 1914.

My dear General,

I know that a great effort is being made against you, and, though I myself am being attacked too, I am quite ready to assist you to the best of my ability.

I have already sent across to the northern bank of the La Bassée canal 3 batteries and 4 battalions. If you thought it possible to relieve to-day or during the night one of your battalions which are in the trenches by one of ours, you would be able to close up your

line a little to the left, and I should be very pleased to assist you in this manner. — If you like you can come to an agreement on the subject with the Officer Commanding XXI. Corps, whom I shall order to fall in with your wishes.

In addition to this, Conneau's cavalry corps is entirely at your disposal, either for supporting a portion of your line or for holding a portion. General Conneau is at the present time with his 9 batteries, his battalion of Chasseurs (greatly reduced to 300 men), his detachment of cyclists (4-500 bayonets), his battalion of dismounted cavalry (6-700 strong), in the district of La Gorgue-Estaires. If you care to entrust to him a portion of your line, he will take charge of it, but it is an undoubted fact that cavalry from the point of view of resistance cannot have the same value as infantry. It seems to me, moreover, that Conneau's cavalry corps could only be employed in the district east of Laventie, and not in the neighbourhood of Givenchy where the ground is too marshy.

DE MAUD'HUY.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EXTENSION OF THE FRONT IN FLANDERS BY THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE—(*concluded*)

#### THE ADVANCE OF THE CAVALRY CORPS AND THE III. CORPS AND THEIR JUNCTION WITH THE IV. CORPS. THE BATTLES OF ARMENTIÈRES AND MESSINES <sup>1</sup>

12TH-18TH OCTOBER 1914

(Maps 7, 10, 11 ; Sketches 2, 3, 4, 5)

12 Oct.  
Map 6.  
Sketch 3.

WE left the III. Corps on the night of the 11th October with the 6th Division east of St. Omer, and the 4th Division arriving by rail near that place. Its detrainment was at first covered by the Cavalry Corps, but as soon as outposts could be placed the III. Corps provided for its own protection. General Pulteney's orders were to concentrate as soon as possible at Hazebrouck ; <sup>2</sup> and it was arranged that motor buses should be provided by the French to carry up the infantry. Unfortunately, these buses did not begin to arrive until midday on the 12th, and meantime the artillery and first line transport and trains had started. There was in consequence much congestion of traffic in the complicated streets of St. Omer and its suburb Arques, and as the move was not completed before dark, many buses lost their way. In the end it was considered that the troops would have reached their destinations many hours earlier and suffered less fatigue had they marched the fourteen miles. The 12th Brigade, which arrived last of the division, was railed right up to Hazebrouck. As a

<sup>1</sup> These are the official names of these battles and the time limits are :—  
Armentières . . . 13th October-2nd November 1914.  
Messines . . . 12th October-2nd November 1914.

As will be seen these names and dates are not entirely appropriate. The point is discussed later in a footnote at the beginning of Chapter V.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 13.

general result, the III. Corps was not ready to advance 12 Oct. from Hazebrouck until 10.30 A.M. on the 13th.

In the Cavalry Corps, the 2nd Cavalry Division covered the concentration of the III. Corps at Hazebrouck, and the 1st Cavalry Division closed up northwards towards the 2nd. It was the intention of the British Commander-in-Chief, as already mentioned in the narrative of the II. Corps, to pass his force north of Lille. The immediate objective of the III. Corps, as defined in the operation order for the 13th,<sup>1</sup> was the line Armentières—Wytsehaete; the Cavalry Corps was to be on the left, extending as far as Ypres. The II. Corps, at Béthune, would, it was hoped, be relieved by the French, and be able to come up on the right of the III. This relief, which was to have been carried out by the two French cavalry corps on the left of the II. Corps closing southward—so that they would have changed positions with the II. Corps—did not take place; and the difficult position in front of La Bassée, as already related, did not permit of the II. Corps being shifted northwards.

On the left of the line of advance of the III. Corps and on the route of Allenby's cavalry corps, lay the line of hills extending from Mont des Cats to Kemmel. These hills overlook the surrounding country with a command of nearly 400 feet, and have spurs running southward which formed a succession of low ridges, most favourable for defence, across the line of the III. Corps advance. The information with regard to the enemy quite correctly tended to show that there was only one German cavalry corps in the neighbourhood, the *IV.*, containing the *3rd*, *6th* and *Bavarian Cavalry Divisions*, with headquarters at Bailleul. The British cavalry, pushing forward on the 12th to make elbow room for the III. Corps, found the enemy established on the Mont des Cats and at Flêtre, on the high road from Cassel to Bailleul. It was obvious that no advance was possible whilst the high ground was in possession of the Germans, and the 3rd Cavalry Brigade was ordered to occupy the Mont des Cats. This hill was crowned by the substantial buildings of a monastery, and its lower slopes were covered by hopfields and other cultivation; but its capture was accomplished towards dusk, after some stiff fighting by the 4th Hussars and 5th Lancers, who attacked, dismounted, from the west, assisted by the 16th Lancers, with D Battery, R.H.A., from the south. The enemy left

Map 7.  
Sketch 3.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 14.

behind among the wounded Prince Max of Hesse, who subsequently died of his injuries.

### 13TH OCTOBER. THE CAPTURE OF METEREN

13 Oct.  
Map 7.  
Sketch 3.

The III. Corps had instructions to render assistance to the II. if required, but as no appeal for it was received, orders were issued by General Pulteney for his two divisions to advance eastwards towards Bailleul on the 13th, side by side :

6th Division (in three columns) on the right against the line Vieux Berquin—Merris (5 miles east of Hazebrouck),

4th Division (in two columns), which started two hours after the 6th, on Flêtre (4 miles east by north of Hazebrouck).

The Cavalry Corps moved on the northern flank to secure the high ground east of the Mont des Cats.

When the advanced guard of the 6th Division reached its objective five miles beyond Hazebrouck, the Germans were found entrenched across the route of the III. Corps, on the far side of a small stream called the Meterenbecque. Their position was on the long ridge which runs down from the main hills and on which is situated Meteren, a well-built village with a prominent church tower, surrounded by cultivated fields. They seemed determined to stand and, at 9 A.M., the Flying Corps noticed two batteries of artillery and about five hundred infantry moving westward from Bailleul towards Meteren. The Cavalry Corps also met with opposition; asked, indeed, for infantry assistance; and was unable to turn the Meteren position from the north. It was therefore judged necessary, although the 10th Brigade—which with the XIV. Brigade R.F.A. formed under Br.-General Haldane the advanced guard of the 4th Division—was making good progress at Flêtre (about 3,000 yards west of Meteren), to halt and arrange a general combined attack of the whole III. Corps on a five mile front extending from La Couronne (3,000 yards south of Merris) to Fontaine Houek (one mile north of Meteren), the first formal British attack of the war. It was not until 2 P.M. that it was set in motion.<sup>1</sup> The day was very wet and misty, and the country much enclosed with hopfields, conditions that prevented the artillery from rendering much assistance. Thus although

<sup>1</sup> Appendices 15, 16 and 17.



the enemy had many machine guns, the fighting had to be done mainly by the infantry. This was a slow process ; but the worst and most serious delay was caused by the battalion detailed to make a turning attack from the north being drawn off from its purpose by a message for help from the cavalry on its left. It was dark before Outtersteene and Meteren, the villages marking the position, were captured by the 18th and 10th Brigades, and Mont Noir (3 miles north of Bailleul) was occupied by the Cavalry Corps. De Mitry's cavalry corps, on the right of the III. Corps, endeavoured to co-operate, but having no howitzers, frankly admitted that it could do nothing among the cottages which line the roads for miles in the dead-level country near Vieux and Neuf Berquin. The few prisoners taken this day belonged to the *4th Jäger*, the *5th* and *9th Dragoons* and *1st Bavarian Jäger*, units of the *2nd*, *3rd*, *6th* and *Bavarian Cavalry Divisions* respectively. Information obtained next day showed that the force opposing the III. Corps had consisted of the *3rd* and *6th Cavalry Divisions*, with four *Jäger* battalions, a *Bavarian Reserve Regiment* and three batteries.<sup>1</sup> Their trenches were found to be exceedingly well sited, close in front of houses, hedges or walls, backgrounds against which the heads of defenders were not visible ; and, as the excavated earth had been scattered and not built up as a parapet, there was nothing to indicate the positions to the attacker. The church tower of Meteren gave the Germans a splendid outlook over the British advance, and they got clear away after they had inflicted casualties on the III. Corps on this day amounting to 708.

Intelligence came in during the 13th that Lille had been occupied by the enemy on the previous day and that his *XIX. Corps* was in that neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> The Flying Corps reported that part of the town was in flames ; that at 9.5 A.M. a long column was on the march from Lille to Armentières ; and that another column, four miles long, was entering Lille from Douai. The two probably represented a division.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere no important movements

<sup>1</sup> Poseck, pp. 187-8, says the *3rd Cavalry Division* with an infantry battalion defended Meteren. The *6th* were south of it at Merris and the Bavarians south again at Vieux Berquin. The *2nd Cavalry Division*, according to Poseck, p. 179, did not arrive in the north, at Lille, until the 17th October.

<sup>2</sup> It was suspected that the *XII. Corps* had also come up to the neighbourhood of Lille, but it was the *XIII.*, not the *XII.*, which arrived on the 12th.

<sup>3</sup> *24th Division* of the *XIX. Corps*.



were observed, but the line Bailleul—St. Jans Cappel, on the next ridge across the route of the III. Corps, was reported strongly held. Arrangements were therefore made by General Pulteney to renew the offensive on the morning of the 14th before the German cavalry corps could be supported by much of the *XIX. Corps*, then known to be in Lille only 20 miles from Meteren. The consent of G.H.Q. (which on the 13th moved from Abbeville to St. Omer) for the co-operation of the Cavalry Corps, and also, towards Kemmel, of the IV. Corps was obtained.

14TH OCTOBER. THE OCCUPATION OF BAILLEUL AND MESSINES; THE COMPLETION OF THE LINE FROM BELFORT TO THE SEA

14 Oct.  
Map 7.  
Sketch 3.

The morning of the 14th broke with heavy mist and rain. Air reconnaissance was impossible until after 5.30 P.M. and even then observation was difficult, and only movements of a few small units were reported. Ground reconnaissances established, after much difficulty and with considerable delay, that the Germans had withdrawn from the neighbourhood of Meteren and had even evacuated Bailleul and retired behind the Lys. They left behind in Bailleul 85 severely wounded men, but carried off, according to the medical officers remaining behind, some 500 or 600 others.

On this day—either as a result of the British advance north of the La Bassée Canal and the consequent heavy German losses, or in pursuance of a plan already determined on—an order was issued by the Chief of the German General Staff which put an end to partial offensives and instructed the *Sixth Army* (*VII.*, *XIII.*, *XIX. Corps* and the *Cavalry Corps*) to remain entirely on the defensive, on the line La Bassée—Armentières—Menin, and await the effect of the attack of a new *Fourth Army*, which was to be brought up between Menin and the sea.<sup>1</sup> Thus, as throughout the “Race to the Sea”, the advance of the British II. and III. Corps having been countered by the enemy’s *VII.*, *XIX.* and *XIII.*, both belligerents were again about to extend their line simultaneously. The Allied move to reach the gap near Ypres, where lay the last chance of out-flanking the enemy before he could form an unbroken barrier from Switzerland to the sea, was already too late.

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, pp. 7, 8. According to Poseck, p. 191, as we have seen (p. 86, fn. 2), the *Sixth Army* renewed the offensive on the 20th.

It seemed to the Allies for a moment, however, as if the odds were turning in their favour in the north. The two cavalries practically balanced each other, and to oppose the Allies north of Armentières—comprising the British 4th and 7th Divisions (with the two of the I. Corps available to reinforce them), two French Territorial divisions and the Belgian Army—the Germans had apparently only the *III. Reserve Corps* (3 divisions) from Antwerp, the *XIX. Corps* and possibly the *XIII. Corps*, if this last were not sent towards La Bassée. 14 Oct.

In the course of the 14th October the Allies completed their barrier, frail indeed in the north, but still a continuous one, for Allenby's cavalry corps, moving north-eastwards, joined hands, as already related, with the 3rd Cavalry Division south of Ypres. Without any opposition worthy of the name, the 1st Cavalry Division, leaving Mont Noir, had occupied Dranoutre, and the 2nd had secured Kemmel. The two then advanced again, the 1st Cavalry Division to the line Neuve Eglise—Wulverghem, and the 2nd to Messines—Wytschaete.<sup>1</sup>

In the III. Corps, as soon as it was ascertained that the enemy had withdrawn from Bailleul, preparations were made for an advance. During the night of the 13/14th October, the II. Corps had sent information of the loss of Givenchy, and suggested that a division of the III. Corps should be diverted to its assistance. General Pulteney considered that the best way to help the II. Corps was to push on, so that in combination with the Cavalry and IV. Corps, he could envelop the German right flank. This course was represented to and approved by G.H.Q., but the reference took time and it was not until 12.30 p.m. that the 4th and 6th Divisions, in heavy rain, left the captured German position at Meteren to reach the line Steenwerck—Dranoutre. Even then progress was slow, owing to the opposition offered—particularly to the 6th Division—by rear guards of cavalry and machine guns, the difficulty of reconnaissance, and the impossibility of artillery support in such bad weather and in such close country. At 4 p.m. the 19th Brigade entered Bailleul and took up a position covering the town about one mile out to the south-east, astride of the Armentières road. By

<sup>1</sup> On this day, the 4th Cavalry Brigade, which had for some days been in reserve, was transferred from the 1st to the 2nd Cavalry Division, so that the former now contained the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Brigades and the latter the 3rd, 4th and 5th.

evening the 4th Division was in, and east of, Bailleul, occupying the low hills north of the 19th Brigade, and the 6th Division extended the line  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles southward to Le Verrier, where it was in touch with de Mitry's cavalry corps.

Thus, on the night of the 14th, the general situation north of the La Bassée Canal was :—<sup>1</sup>

Map 7. Sketches 1 and 3.	II. Corps . . . . .	Pont Fixe—Bout Deville ( $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Estaires).
	Conneau's and de Mitry's Cavalry Corps . . . . .	Pont Riqueul (2 miles north-west of Bout Deville) to Doulieu.
	III. Corps . . . . .	Le Verrier to Bailleul.
	Cavalry Corps . . . . .	Dranoutre—Wyttschaete.
	3rd Cavalry Division . . . . .	Wyttschaete.
	7th Division . . . . .	Ypres.
	French 87th and 89th Territorial Divisions . . . . .	Ypres and west of Ypres.
	French Naval Brigade . . . . .	Dixmude.
	Belgian Army . . . . .	On the Yser from Dixmude to the sea.

#### 15TH OCTOBER. THE ADVANCE TO THE LYS

15 Oct.  
Map 7.  
Sketch 3.

At 1.45 A.M. on the 15th October Allenby's cavalry corps received orders<sup>2</sup> from G.H.Q. to reconnoitre the line of the river Lys from Estaires to Menin, with a view to the advance of the I. Corps into that region. During the day, however, Conneau's cavalry corps secured Estaires and attacked but failed to take Sailly (two miles north-east of Estaires), held by the left of the *IV. Cavalry Corps*,<sup>3</sup> and in the sector of the river, north of the French, with which General Allenby was concerned, the Germans were found to be in possession of the bridges.<sup>4</sup> It was impossible to proceed below Comines,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles short of Menin, as the enemy held the line of the

<sup>1</sup> The I. Corps was still on the Aisne, but the 2nd Division commenced entraining for Flanders on the 14th.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 18.

<sup>3</sup> Poseck, p. 189. There was at Sailly a detachment of the *Bavarian Cavalry Division*, according to the history of the *1 Chevaulegers Regiment*, p. 25. It retired at noon owing to lack of ammunition.

<sup>4</sup> The advanced guards of the *XIX. and XIII. Corps* came up during the course of the 14th/15th October and supported and relieved the cavalry from Menin to Houplines. (Sketch 5. Also Poseck, p. 189. "Regt. No. 121", p. 16.) Further south the German cavalry retired through a line taken up by the infantry ("1 Chevaulegers Regiment", p. 26).



Comines—Ypres canal almost as far north as Hollebeke.<sup>1</sup> 15 Oct. A footing was, however, gained at Warneton, and the enemy was driven from the villages of Houthem and Hollebeke to the far side of the canal.

In the III. Corps the 6th and 4th Divisions were ordered to secure the line Steenwerck—Neuve Eglise, which crosses the Bailleul—Armentières road, some three miles south-east of Bailleul. Air reconnaissance revealed nothing of importance, except that at 9.30 A.M. a column, estimated at a division with a cavalry brigade on its southern flank,<sup>2</sup> was moving out of Armentières in a south-westerly direction. A force, variously estimated at from 3,000 to 10,000 men, was reported at Menin,<sup>3</sup> but there was no sign of other troops joining them from the south.

At noon, after a conversation with General Foch, Sir John French met the commanders of the III. and Cavalry Corps at Hazebrouck, and ordered General Pulteney to press on to the river Lys, occupy Armentières, repair the bridges and be ready to advance north-eastwards, clear of Lille, as originally arranged, with his corps astride the river,<sup>4</sup> taking its defenders in flank. Orders were therefore issued by the III. Corps at 2.45 P.M. for the 6th Division to secure the bridges over the Lys at Saily (in co-operation with de Mitry's cavalry corps) and Bac St. Maur; and the 4th Division those at Erquinghem and Pont de Nieppe. Although the evening and night were foggy and the ground had not been reconnoitred, three of the four bridges were captured before corps orders to stop operations on account of the unfavourable weather, sent out at 9.30 P.M., reached the troops. The 18th Brigade found Saily deserted and on fire, with the bridge partly destroyed; but the 38th Field Company R.E. repaired it by the light of the burning church. At Bac St. Maur, half of the swing bridge had been opened and a weak German rear guard fired some shots at the 17th Brigade, but men of the 12th Field Company R.E., crossing the river on a raft, swung back the bridge and the village was occupied. Three thousand German cavalry, according to the inhabitants, had left it the previous night. At Erquinghem the advanced guard of the 11th Brigade in the early morning found the bridge

<sup>1</sup> Posts of the *121 Regt., 26th Division, XIII. Corps*, actually got as far as Gheluvelt ("Regt. No. 121", pp. 16, 17).

<sup>2</sup> Possibly part of the *24th Division (XIX. Corps)*.

<sup>3</sup> The right of the *26th Division (XIII. Corps)*. The arrival of the *XIII. Corps* escaped notice from the air.

<sup>4</sup> This order was confirmed by message O.A. 500. Appendix 19.



undamaged ; but the one at Pont de Nieppe was barricaded and defended, though apparently only by a small party with four machine guns. In accordance with the instructions of the III. Corps, the 4th Division waited until the 6th Division had crossed the Lys and was ready to assist it.

The retirement of the Germans across the upper Lys tended to confirm the information that had been obtained that they were holding a defensive front from La Bassée to the Comines Canal and were preparing an offensive north of this, as was actually the case.

On this day the 16th Brigade rejoined the III. from the I. Corps, and the 19th passed into G.H.Q. Reserve, and was at once ordered north from Steenwerck to Vlamertinghe, behind Ypres.

The situation about midnight of the 15th/16th October was :—

II. Corps	. . .	Pont Fixe — Festubert — Richebourg St. Vaast—Croix Barbée—Pont du Hem.
Conneau's Cavalry Corps	<sup>1</sup>	Pont du Hem—Estaires.
III. Corps	. . .	Close up to the Lys at Sailly, Bac St. Maur, Erquinghem and Pont de Nieppe, with its left in touch with the Cavalry Corps near Romarin.
Cavalry Corps and Cavalry Division	3rd . . .	On the line of the Lys from Armentières to near Comines, and thence along the Comines Canal to Ypres.
19th Brigade	. . .	Moving on Vlamertinghe.
7th Division	. . .	In front of Ypres from Voormezele to Wieltje.
I. Corps :		
2nd Division	. . .	In course of detraining and billeting at and south-west of Hazebrouek in area Hazebrouek—Ebblinghem—Blaringhem. <sup>2</sup>
1st Division	. . .	In course of relief on the Aisne. All units were south of the river at 6 A.M.

<sup>1</sup> The French 7th Cavalry Division was moving towards Ypres and de Mitry's cavalry corps was preparing to follow it.

<sup>2</sup> Its relief had been completed on the night of the 13th/14th October, and it entrained on the 14th.

French 87th and 89th Territorial Divisions—under

15 Oct.

General Bidon . . .	Between Poperinghe and Ypres.
French Naval Brigade . . .	Dixmude.
Belgian Army . . .	On Yser. Five divisions from Dixmude to Nieuport, and one, with the cavalry, in reserve.

Of the German forces from Antwerp which were following up the Belgians, three columns were observed whose heads, directed towards Ypres—Dixmude, reached the following places on the 15th :<sup>1</sup>

Southern Column :—Roulers ; Centre Column :—Cortemarck (6 miles N.N.W. of Roulers) ; Northern Column :—Couckelaere (11 miles N.N.W. of Roulers).

Ostend also was occupied by the enemy on this day, and Germans were known to be in Bruges.

#### 16TH OCTOBER. THE ATTEMPT AT A GENERAL ADVANCE EASTWARDS

Sir John French's operation orders for the 16th October,<sup>2</sup> issued on the afternoon of the 15th, for the first time included in them Sir H. Rawlinson's troops. In view of the fact that the Germans were falling back before the III. Corps and apparently no forces, except three divisions of the Antwerp siege corps, were moving against Ypres, his intention was to advance with his whole force eastwards, attacking the enemy wherever met. Simultaneously General Foch had arranged for an advance of the Belgian and French troops in the north.

16 Oct.  
Map 10.  
Sketch 5.

Allenby's cavalry corps was ordered to cross the Lys between Armentières and Menin, and eventually to cover the left of the British advance.

The III. Corps was to support the cavalry closely, and its right was to be directed against Fleurbaix (3 miles S.S.W. of Armentières). In the first place it was to move north-eastwards down and astride of the Lys to clear the enemy from the front of the Cavalry Corps and get touch with the 7th Division of the IV. Corps near Ypres. The 7th

<sup>1</sup> All the above were troops of the *III. Reserve Corps* (General von Beseler), consisting now of the *5th* and *6th Reserve Divisions* and the *4th Ersatz Division*. "Ypres", pp. 6-8. The *Marine Division* followed later.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 19.

Division itself was to move eastward between Courtrai<sup>1</sup> and Roulers, with the 3rd Cavalry Division on its left, north of Roulers; it was to keep slightly ahead of the III. Corps and co-operate with the Belgian Army.

The II. Corps was, if possible (it proved to be impossible),<sup>2</sup> to draw northwards towards the III. Corps.

Practically, only small progress was made on the 16th October except, as already related, by the II. Corps.

At 6 A.M. Allenby's cavalry corps moved forward to force the passage of the Lys between Houplines and Comines. It was very foggy, as are most autumn mornings in Flanders. In consequence, no air reconnaissance was possible, and the artillery could not give even the small amount of support possible in a dead-level country where the view is interrupted by buildings, small enclosures, clumps of bushes and tall trees along the roads. Flowing through water meadows near Armentières the Lys is a muddy stream, fifteen to twenty yards wide, 5 feet deep, and passable only at the bridges. As the British cavalry looked down on the valley from the high ground near Kemmel, it appeared to be grass land, but on nearer approach it turned out to be intersected by boggy streams and innumerable dykes which made movement of cavalry off the few roads impossible.<sup>3</sup> Although the enemy did not appear to be in great strength and his advanced troops were pushed back, all essential points of the river were found well defended. The 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions attacked the passages, and dismounted men pushed in to within fifty yards of the enemy; but the Cavalry Corps had no howitzers, and the 13-pdrs. lacking H.E. shell, could not stir the Germans from the houses.<sup>4</sup> The 4th Hussars of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade who had entered Warneton were unable to advance beyond the central square, and at night were ordered to withdraw.

The III. Corps, after its night advance, by which the passages of the Lys had been secured, gave most of its

<sup>1</sup> Not on Map 10. It is 7 miles E.N.E. of Menin.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> The Lys valley was as unsuitable for the operations of cavalry as it had been in Froissart's time. He wrote of it :—"The river Lis is so difficult "to cross that, except at certain places, it cannot be passed. There are no "fords and the country . . . through which it runs is so marshy horses "cannot approach it." "Chronicles", Johnes's translation, chap. cxiii.

<sup>4</sup> The opponents of the Cavalry Corps belonged to the *26th Division*, which had come up on the 14th and prepared, two days before, a defensive line along the Lys, with Menin as a supporting point. "Regt. No. 121", p. 16.



attention on the 16th to consolidating its gains. The 6th 16 Oct. Division moved forward to a position about two miles east of the river from Rouge de Bout (2 miles south-east of Sailly), to a point just south-west of Erquinghem, its right being in touch with Conneau's cavalry corps. The 4th Division, on the left of the 6th, was directed, as before mentioned, to await the advance of its sister division before attempting to pass the Lys. Shortly after noon, by 4th Division orders, Br.-General Hunter-Weston (11th Brigade) sent the 1/Somerset Light Infantry to cross at Erquinghem, as the 6th Division was now approaching that place from the south-west. The Somerset passed the bridge without loss and established themselves in the village beyond. Later, towards 4 P.M., General Hunter-Weston, with the 1/Hampshire, seized the bridge at Pont de Nieppe, under covering fire of a field gun and a howitzer. A well-aimed first round from the gun struck the barricade on the bridge and scared the defenders away, so that no capture of prisoners was made. The 12th Brigade (Lt.-Colonel F. G. Anley), the left of the 4th Division, occupied Ploegsteert, and placed guns on Hill 63, a commanding height north of that village; and the 4th Divisional Mounted Troops reached Neuve Eglise, where they came in touch with the Cavalry Corps. Thus both divisions of the III. Corps had secured the passages of the Lys in their area.

In Sir H. Rawlinson's force, the 7th Division was moved to a covering position about five miles east of Ypres, running from the west side of Zandvoorde, through Gheluvelt to Zonnebeke, and some six miles long, and there the division began to entrench. The 3rd Cavalry Division was on its left near Poelcappelle and in touch, as ordered, with the Belgian 1st Cavalry Division. The French 87th Territorial Division remained in support at Ypres and the 89th at Poperinghe. In the afternoon General Byng moved his cavalry eastwards and engaged enemy patrols near Oostnicuwkerke, a couple of miles west of Roulers, confirming previous reports of the presence of German forces near that place.<sup>1</sup>

On the British front, therefore, the attitude of the Germans had been defensive, and in some places they had yielded two or three miles of ground with little show of resistance. But towards 4 P.M. they seemed to give a clue to their future action, for, after heavy bombardment, they delivered an attack on the trenches of the French Naval

<sup>1</sup> The 6th Reserve Division.



Brigade at Dixmude. This was repulsed, but attempts to capture the place continued throughout the night and until 11 A.M. next morning, when the enemy disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

The situation on the night of the 16th/17th, though the II., III. and IV. Corps had advanced slightly, differed little from that of the previous day, except that reinforcements were approaching Ypres. One division of French cavalry had reached there, three others, under General de Mitry, on the march north, were very near Ypres; the 19th Brigade had arrived at Vlamertinghe just west of Ypres; and the whole of the 2nd Division was available near Hazebrouck.

#### 17TH OCTOBER. THE OCCUPATION OF ARMENTIÈRES

17 Oct. G.H.Q. orders for the 17th October directed the advance to be continued on the same lines as on the 16th,<sup>2</sup> with the exception that the Cavalry Corps was merely to contain the enemy on the Lys and not attempt to force the passages until the effects of the advance of the III. Corps were felt. The cavalry carried out its rôle by entrenching the low railway embankment that follows the left bank, and making occasional dismounted attacks on the bridges.

In the III. Corps, the 6th and 4th Divisions were ordered to move eastward at 7.30 A.M., the former to the line Bois Grenier (2½ miles south of Armentières)—Chapelle d'Armentières, and the latter to push one brigade into Armentières. If this operation was successful, as proved to be the case, General Pulteney intended to move north-east to cover the repair of the bridges into Armentières, and to send the remainder of the 4th Division across the Lys.

The 6th Division encountered little opposition, the Germans retiring before it; and at noon it was ordered to occupy a position Rouge de Bout—Bois Grenier—Chapelle d'Armentières, its left thus resting on Armentières. This it carried out, putting its three infantry brigades in line there.

In the 4th Division, the 10th Brigade, under Br.-General Haldane, passing through the 11th, crossed the

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Ronarc'h, p. 64. The German attack seems to have been contrary to the orders given to General von Beseler on the 15th, which were that the *III. Reserve Corps* was not to advance for a few days, so as to avoid drawing the attention of the British and French prematurely to movements in this neighbourhood. "Ypres", p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 20.

Lys at Erquinghem, and entered Armentières. This place, 17 Oct. a modern-built manufacturing town, with wide streets and covering much ground, was full of French refugees from Lille. It was reported to have been evacuated by the Germans and there was every sign of a hasty flight. Small parties of Germans had, however, remained behind, firing from the houses; but they were dislodged without great difficulty, and General Haldane's advanced guard, in spite of constant petty opposition, made its way through the town and north-eastward to Houplines. There, one party of Germans in particular held out in a farm, until late at night an assault was made on it. Finally, the 10th Brigade established itself in and around Armentières—Houplines, with the 12th extending its line on the left bank of the Lys, northward to Le Gheer in front of Ploegsteert Wood. The 11th Brigade remained in reserve, also on the left bank, about Steenwerck. The prisoners taken at and near Armentières proved to belong not only to the *Cavalry Corps*, but to the infantry of the *XIX.* and *XIII. Corps*, fully confirming the presence of these formations. The British advance had, in fact, caught these German corps just as they had taken over from the *Cavalry Corps*.

The IV. Corps waited during the 17th in its position of the previous day for the advance of the III. Corps, the 7th Division occupying its extended position hastily entrenched on the line Zandvoorde—Gheluvelt—Zonnebeke, with the 3rd Cavalry Division near Passchendaele. The latter had constant skirmishes with hostile patrols, and the 7th Division was occasionally shelled; but the 20th Brigade, on the right, was so much pestered by German snipers, that it pushed forward half a battalion of the 2/Scots Guards, from Zandvoorde to the ridge over a mile to the eastward on which Kruiseecke stands. From this point the German main position appeared to be less than half a mile away passing through the farm America and Koelberg.<sup>1</sup> Sketch A.

Information obtained on this day tended to the belief that the enemy had also begun to entrench a position opposite the III. Corps on the rise of ground four miles east of Armentières marked by Prêmesques—Pérenchies—Verlinghem. Masked as it was, in October 1914, by trees, this low clay ridge, known as the Pérenchies ridge, appeared to rise abruptly from the ground and with its command

<sup>1</sup> These were entrenchments made by the outposts of the 26th Division.

of 40 to 50 feet above the general level, crowned by rows of small houses, was a very important feature of the topography. At its southern end is the smaller outlying Aubers ridge, whilst eastward it drops sharply to the river Deule and the plain on which lie Lille and her sister towns. Everywhere, as the Lys was passed and the great manufacturing district approached, did the houses and cottages, orchards and gardens with wire fences and hedges, grow more numerous and the facilities for defence improve. From Verlinghem the German position seemed to continue northward to Wervicq and America, and then turn back eastwards—so as to cover the right flank of the main Army—to Koelberg and Kezelberg (2½ miles north of Menin). Reconnaissances sent towards Roulers by the cavalry discovered no great force of the enemy, whose main movements seemed rather to be north and north-west of that place and towards the Belgians; but three columns, each apparently about the strength of a brigade, were reported from the air as marching westwards from Roulers, Thourout and Ostend.<sup>1</sup> Later, at 4 P.M., Roulers was reported clear by aviators and at 6 P.M. the Germans who had been attacking Dixmude also disappeared. Low clouds, however, interfered with air reconnaissance and no clue to any great movement being in progress was obtained.

The position at Ypres was strengthened on this day by the arrival on the left of the British of four French cavalry divisions, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th, under General de Mitry, withdrawn from the gap between the II. and III. Corps. This force, with the 4th and 7th Cavalry Divisions leading and a detachment of the 87th Territorial Division in support, drove the German advanced parties before them out of Woumen and Clercken (about four miles south-east of Dixmude); and then, in conjunction with the Belgian cavalry on its left, advanced some distance beyond Houthulst Forest. The British 2nd Division made a short march from the Hazebrouck district towards Poperinghe.

Map 6.

Maps 8,  
10.  
Sketch 5.

Thus on the 17th—taking into account the advance towards Herlies made by the II. Corps near La Bassée, the occupation of Armentières by the III. Corps, and the advance of de Mitry's cavalry—small but satisfactory progress had been made although Allenby's cavalry was unable to cross the Lys.

<sup>1</sup> The German *III. Reserve Corps* was concentrating north of Roulers to clear the front for the fresh troops that were coming up.

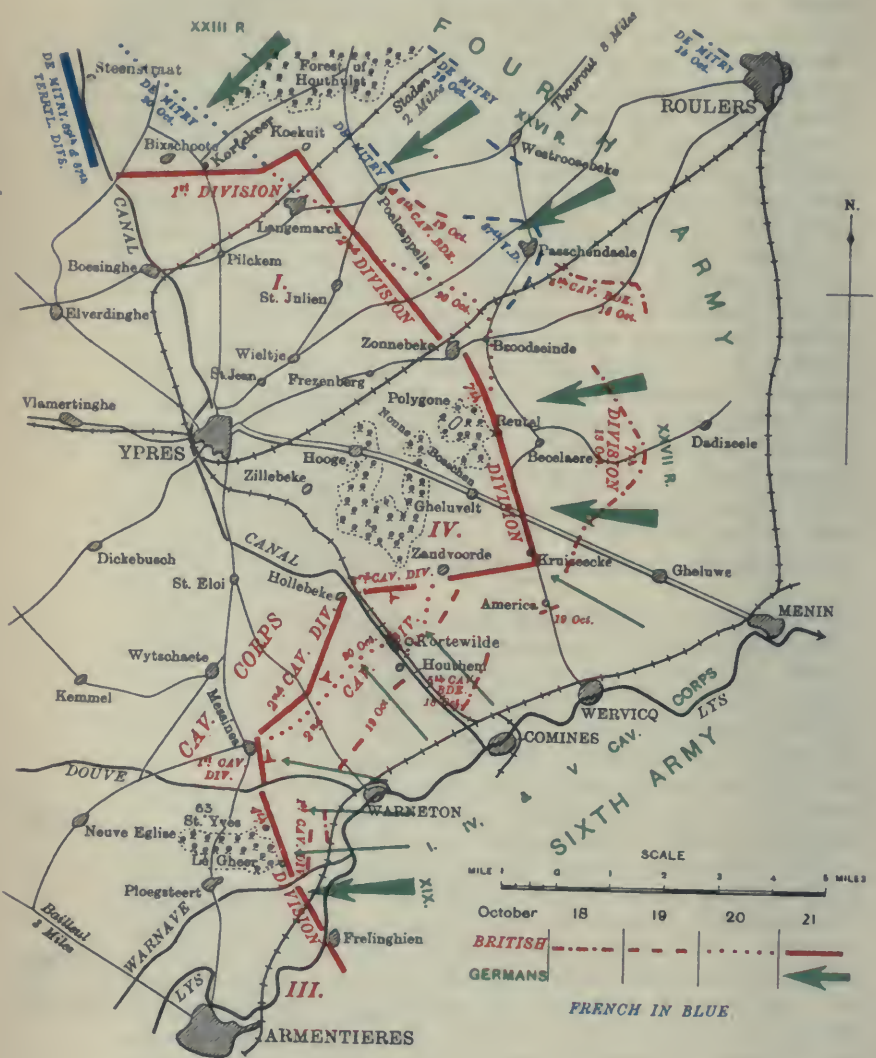




# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

18<sup>TH</sup> - 21<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 1914.

SKETCH 4.



The situation on the night of the 17th/18th was 17 Oct. therefore :—

II. Corps :

- 5th Division . . . Givenchy—Le Transloy.
- 3rd Division . . . Le Hue—Herlies.
- Conneau's Cavalry Corps  
(3 divisions) . . . Fromelles.

- III. Corps . . . Astride the Lys. Four brigades on right bank from Rouge de Bout to Armentières and Houplines; two on left bank: Le Gheer—Hill 63.

Cavalry Corps :

- 1st Division . . . Headquarters : Dranoutre.
- 2nd Division . . . Headquarters : Messines.
- 19th Brigade . . . Vlamertinghe.
- IV. Corps . . . In front of Ypres. Zandvoorde to Passchendaele.

de Mitry's Cavalry Corps

- (4 divisions) . . . Poelcappelle to Houthulst.
- 87th Territorial Division . . . Ypres.
- 89th Territorial Division . . . Poperinghe.
- French Naval Brigade . . . Dixmude.
- Belgian Army . . . Dixmude—Nieuport, with out- Map 6.  
posts and cavalry in front.

I. Corps :

- 1st Division . . . On journey from Aisne to Flanders.
- 2nd Division . . . In area Hazebrouek—Poperinghe—Cassel—with 6th Brigade at Hazebrouck.

18TH OCTOBER. THE EVE OF THE BATTLES OF YPRES

By his operation orders issued at 7.10 P.M. on the 17th,<sup>1</sup> 18 Oct. Sir John French directed that a vigorous attack against Map 10. the enemy should be made by the B.E.F., in co-operation Sketches 4, 5. with the French forces on its right and left. The II. Corps was to endeavour to capture La Bassée; the III. Corps was to move down the Lys, as he had ordered on the 15th, to assist the Cavalry Corps; the IV. Corps was to move on Menin. The portions of the I. Corps which had arrived were to remain in their billeting areas. General

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 21.

Bidon, commanding the Groupe d'Ypres,<sup>1</sup> under General Foch's directions, issued corresponding orders: de Mitry's cavalry being directed on Roulers—Thourout (8 miles north of Roulers), supported by detachments (five battalions and three batteries) of the 87th Territorial Division, whilst the remainder of this division entrenched along the canal between Ypres and Boesinghe. One brigade of the 89th—the rest had been detached to Dunkirk—remained west of Ypres at Poperinghe.<sup>2</sup>

18TH OCTOBER. OPERATIONS OF THE III. CORPS:  
THE ATTEMPT TO SECURE PÉRENCHIES RIDGE

18 Oct.  
Map 10.  
Sketch 5.

With the Germans in position entrenched on the low ridge which lies between Lille and Armentières marked by Fournes—Radinghem—La Vallée—Pérenchies—Verlinghem,<sup>3</sup> General Pulteney considered certain preliminary operations necessary before he could carry out G.H.Q. orders to advance down the Lys valley from Armentières. He felt that he must first drive back the enemy forces on the Pérenchies ridge; for if he made a processional march in front of them without so doing his right wing would be in constant danger; and secondly, he must gain possession of Frélinghien, 3 miles below Armentières, so as to secure

<sup>1</sup> De Mitry's four cavalry divisions and 87th and 89th Territorial Divisions. In addition, the 60th Chasseur battalion and a weak battalion of the 41st Regiment were attached to the cavalry. General Foch's instructions to General Bidon were:—"Whilst holding the point d'appui of Ypres—Boesinghe [3 miles north of Ypres] in a manner so that it cannot possibly be lost, act with the available cavalry towards Roulers and Cortemarck [7 miles N.N.W. of Roulers] with the purpose of reconnoitring and attacking the enemy reported in these directions; if necessary support the cavalry by bodies of infantry pushed ahead". Boullaire, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Boullaire, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> The information was that the whole of the *XIX. Corps* was opposite the III. Corps:—*89th Infantry Brigade* at Englos in rear of La Vallée (with a detachment at Frélinghien); *47th* at Lomme in rear of Prêmesques; *48th* and *88th* at Verlinghem; and that there was another division (*26th*) near Menin, and troops, another division (*25th R.*), between Frélinghien—Menin. "Ypres", p. 7, says that the *XIX.* and *XIII. Corps* were in position "from Menin, through Comines, to Warneton, and thence east of Armentières, where they came into touch with the *14th Infantry Division*, "which was further south, near the western forts of Lille". As regards the number of divisions the British information was therefore entirely correct. The *XIII. Corps*, which held the line from Warneton to Menin, was, as before stated, on the night of the 18th/19th, replaced in the line by four cavalry divisions, *3rd*, *6th*, *9th* and *Bavarian*, and moved from the right of the *XIX. Corps* to its left. Poseck, pp. 190-1. "Regt. No. 122", p. 33.



freedom of passage across the Lys at that place and connection between the parts of the 4th Division on either side of the river. He therefore ordered <sup>1</sup> the 6th Division to test the strength of the Germans holding the line some three miles long from La Vallée to Pérenchies, to push them back if they were weak, but to wait for the co-operation of the 4th Division if they were strong. The 4th Division was ordered to attack Frélinghien from both sides of the river. 18 Oct.

General Keir (6th Division), in consequence, sent the 18th Brigade (Br.-General W. N. Congreve) at 6.30 A.M. against the sector La Vallée—Paradis (just south of Prêmesques) and the 17th (Br.-General W. R. B. Doran) against Prêmesques—Pérenchies, each with an artillery brigade attached. The brigade commanders were instructed not to engage more than half their infantry without informing divisional headquarters. The 16th Brigade (Br.-General E. C. Ingouville-Williams),<sup>2</sup> in reserve, was subsequently ordered to send forward, on the right, one battalion to Hameau de Bas<sup>3</sup> and Bacquart, small collections of houses lying in front of Radinghem, at the foot of the ridge, to feel for the enemy. But the 1/Buffs, which were given the task, encountered no one. The reconnaissance of the 17th and 18th Brigades, on the other hand, soon developed into an action. In the 18th, the 2/Durham Light Infantry and 1/West Yorkshire reached their objectives towards 11 A.M., after encountering only slight resistance. On their left in the 17th Brigade the 2/Leinster and 3/Rifle Brigade sent against Prêmesques and Pérenchies respectively, both met with continuous opposition as they moved up the slopes in front of them; but by 10 A.M. the Leinsters were on top of the ridge, in Prêmesques and in sight of Lille. They could not get further and, finding the enemy strongly entrenched south-east of them, they dug in and waited. The 3/Rifle Brigade made some progress, but its left flank not being covered by other troops, it was eventually forced back by machine-gun and rifle fire from the houses, although the supporting artillery had managed to silence the most troublesome of the German batteries.

Meanwhile, the headquarters of the III. Corps had come

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 22.

<sup>2</sup> Killed 1916 in command of the 34th Division at the Battle of the Somme.

<sup>3</sup> Shown on 1/100,000 map as Hau. de Bas.



to the conclusion that the enemy in front of General Keir was weak,<sup>1</sup> and at 11.30 A.M. they ordered the 6th Division to press the Germans vigorously eastwards and the 4th Division to contain them on the north on the line Funquercau (a mile west of Verlinghem)—Frélinghien. The order explained that before the corps could advance down the Lys to Menin it was essential to drive the Germans not only off the ridge but over the river Deule beyond it, and make dispositions to prevent them debouching from Lille, through whose western suburbs the Deule passes.

Shortly before noon, as the Buffs on his right had met with no opposition, General Keir had sent the 16th Brigade, in co-operation with the French 10th Cavalry Division (of Conneau's corps), to attack Radinghem. On receipt of the corps orders he instructed the 18th and 17th Brigades, each supported by a brigade of artillery as before, to press forward on either side of the Armentières—Lille road, and the 16th (less two battalions in divisional reserve) to wheel north-east from Radinghem, in order to turn the enemy's flank from the south. The movement was not under way until about 2.30 P.M. On the right, the York and Lancaster and the Buffs of the 16th Brigade had some difficulty in approaching Radinghem, on account of machine guns and rifle fire and the enclosed and blind nature of the country; but in the end they mastered the defenders of the village.<sup>2</sup> They were ordered at once to entrench the ground gained, for the strength of the Germans evidently lay beyond in some belts of wood, and in a chateau, the Chateau de Flandres, half a mile to the south-east of the village, which flanked them. The next advance lay across open ground, and in attempting it the two battalions came under heavy machine-gun fire, and were immediately afterwards counter-attacked. The situation for a moment seemed serious, but when the right of the York and Lancaster, which had moved direct on the chateau, threatened to outflank the Germans, they hastily withdrew. Instructions were now received to hand over Radinghem to the French I. Cavalry Corps which was still on the III. Corps

<sup>1</sup> It was indeed the weakest period of the German defence. But from La Bassée to Menin, over 25 miles, there were three corps, *VII.*, *XIX.* and *XIII.*, and eight cavalry divisions, with 2½ British corps, (the I. Corps had not yet come into the picture), 1½ French Territorial divisions and 7 cavalry divisions against them.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently part of the *139th Regiment (XIX. Corps)* which was relieved two days later by the *52nd Brigade (XIII. Corps)*. "Regt. No. 122", p. 34.

right. When only 150 cavalrymen appeared, it was decided **18 Oct.** that the two British battalions should remain, and they entrenched a short distance south of the village. Their casualties had been 5 officers wounded, 25 other ranks killed and 144 wounded.

On the left of the 16th Brigade, the 18th had been ordered to attack and make good the line Ennetières—Capinghem, on top of the ridge, roughly a mile in front of its position at La Vallée—Paradis. The Durham Light Infantry on the right secured its objective about 5 P.M. and established itself east of Ennetières. The East Yorkshire on its left were, however, much hampered by enfilade fire of machine guns from the left, for the Leinsters of the 17th Brigade, although in the village of Prêmesques, were unable to master the Mont de Prêmesques, which lies immediately south of it. At nightfall the East Yorkshire were still half a mile short of Capinghem; they had lost 75 men and the Durham L.I. just a hundred.

The 17th Brigade on the left of the 18th—although an additional battalion, the 1/Royal Fusiliers, was put in on the left—was unable to make progress, and at 5 P.M. when still on the line Prêmesques—Epinette (two miles east of Armentières) was ordered to entrench. Its right battalion, the Leinsters, had got nearer to Lille than British troops were to be for many a long day.

Thus, at night on the 18th, the general line of the 6th Division was convex towards the enemy, and certain points of the Pérenchies ridge were in its hands.

The 4th Division, on the left of the 6th, had on the 17th October occupied Armentières and Houplines on the right bank of the Lys with the 10th Brigade, and thence as far as Le Gheer on the left bank with the 12th. During the evening of the 17th this line was entrenched and machine-gun posts were constructed; Houplines bridge was repaired; and divisional headquarters were established at Nieppe, where they were to remain all the winter. To carry out III. Corps orders for the 18th October to capture Frélinghien, the 4th Division moved forward at 6.30 A.M. The 10th Brigade, with a howitzer battery specially attached—as it was judged from its experiences of the previous day that it would have many defended houses to deal with—advanced on the right bank, and the 12th Brigade on both banks of the river, supported by the whole of the remainder of the divisional artillery.

It now had become evident that the main line of the

Germans in front of Lille did not run as at first supposed. Instead of continuing northwards it turned west at Verlinghem, ran thence to Frélinghien, and then north along the Lys. Thus the line Verlinghem—Frélinghien, three miles long, formed a flank at right angles to the general front. Frélinghien, at its outer and salient angle, could therefore be attacked from both sides, south and west; but the right of any force advancing against the southern face of this salient was bound to be caught in the re-entrant of the line which has Verlinghem at its angle and be enfiladed from the general German front. Into this re-entrant, an area of grass meadows, dotted with many farms and cottages, the 2/Seaforth Highlanders and 1/R. Irish Fusiliers of the 10th Brigade led the attack, with the 2/R. Dublin Fusiliers acting as right flank guard and connecting with the 6th Division. At the road from Pérenchies to Le Ruage (between Houplines and Frélinghien) progress was stopped by rifle and machine-gun fire from houses, whilst the right came under fire of guns at short range from the eastern side of the re-entrant. The 12th Brigade, on the left bank of the river, moving against the western side of the salient, with the King's Own and Lancashire Fusiliers leading, reached the railway without encountering resistance; but after crossing this it came under heavy fire from front and flank, and halted to allow the 10th to draw level.

Thus it will be seen that when Major-General H. F. M. Wilson received his copy of the revised orders of the III. Corps issued at 11.30 A.M., directing the 6th Division to press on, and the 4th Division to contain the Germans on the line Verlinghem—Frélinghien, he was still short of the objective assigned to him, and had merely to continue his operations. The 10th Brigade, with an enemy in position in front and on the right flank, and without support from the 6th Division on its right, could, however, make no progress. Assistance was sent to it—first the 2/Essex from the 12th, and eventually two battalions from the 11th Brigade then in corps reserve—but no result was obtained. The 12th Brigade fared better, as it was easier on the west bank of the Lys to support it with artillery, and by nightfall it had captured Le Touquet, opposite Frélinghien, although the village was strongly held and supported by continuous crossfire from the far side of the river.

At 7.22 P.M. orders were issued by the III. Corps to the 4th and 6th Divisions to hold the ground gained and organize strong reserves.



So far, therefore, as the III. Corps was concerned, some progress had been made on its right, but only a small amount on its left. Its general line formed a rough convex arc across the German re-entrant at Verlinghem passing by Radinghem—Ennetières—Prêmesques—Epinette—a point a mile north-east of Epinette—Le Touquet (opposite Frélinghien)—Pont Rouge. 18 Oct.

#### 18TH OCTOBER. OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY CORPS

On the left of the III. Corps the Cavalry Corps made attacks against the whole line from Deulemont to Tenbrielen (two miles north of Comines), in close touch with the III. Corps on its right and the 7th Division on its left; but it could make no progress, as the enemy defence was too strong and too well organized. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade, assisted by the Inniskilling Fusiliers of the 12th Brigade, from Le Gheer, managed to push parties up to within three hundred yards of Pont Rouge opposite Deulemont, but could get no further. Map 11.  
Sketch 4.

#### 18TH OCTOBER. MOVE OF THE IV. CORPS TOWARDS MENIN

For the IV. Corps the 18th October seemed to be a lost day; little progress was made, but this turned out to be a piece of good fortune which probably saved the 7th Division from the disaster of being cut off during an isolated advance. G.H.Q. Operation Orders<sup>1</sup> directed that it should "move" on Menin. As the word "attack" was used in the paragraph referring to the II. Corps, Sir H. Rawlinson, bearing in mind his instructions not to push too much ahead of the III. Corps, gave General Capper verbal instructions merely to move forward and gain ground with a view to a definite attack next day. The 3rd Cavalry Division was directed to advance in conjunction with the French and Belgian cavalry on its left and endeavour to occupy Roulers.

By General Capper's orders, the 7th Division, starting at 6 A.M., began a wheel forward pivoting on its right, the 20th Brigade near Zandvoorde, to the line Kruiseecke—Terhand—Waterdamhoek, on the swell of ground in front of the Ypres ridge which runs from Zandvoorde to Moorslede. The 20th Brigade readjusted its front to face

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 21.



south-east, whilst the 21st Brigade swung forward with a flank guard, furnished by the 22nd, on its left. The movement, which meant an advance of about 4,000 yards on the left, met with very little resistance, for the German main line was along the Lys, and by 1 P.M. the division was on its new position, digging in, with no interference except from guns at Wervicq, which shelled its right. The whole division now faced south-east, instead of east, and its front was roughly parallel to, and 2,000 yards from, the German line of posts covering Menin : America—Koelberg—Kezelberg.<sup>1</sup>

About midday a liaison officer from G.H.Q. arrived at 7th Division headquarters, and the misunderstanding with regard to the interpretation of the order to move on Menin was discovered. At 1.45 P.M. orders were telegraphed from St. Omer to the IV. Corps to push on to Menin, for co-operation with the French moving on Roulers had been promised. By this time there was local information of a considerable concentration of Germans, together with railway movement, at Courtrai (seven miles E.N.E. of Menin),<sup>2</sup> as well as of the presence of hostile troops immediately north of Menin.<sup>3</sup> In view of the wide extension of the 7th Division, and the necessity of arranging for cavalry co-operation on each flank before advancing, it was then decided to postpone attack until next day.

In front of the cavalry on the left of the 7th Division the German *III. Reserve Corps* appeared to be retiring northwards, and General de Mitry met with little opposition and advanced well east of Houthulst Forest. His divisions occupied Roulers and Hooglede (3 miles north-west of Roulers), after a short engagement; Staden (6 miles north-west of Roulers) was found evacuated, and Cortemarck (7 miles N.N.W. of Roulers) and Zarren (3 miles west of Cortemarck) were taken after some slight resistance on the roads in Houthulst Forest.<sup>4</sup> The 3rd Cavalry Division, which watched the ground between de Mitry and the 7th Division, saw little of any enemy. The only incident recorded in the diary is the firing on Bavarian cavalry near Passchendaele early in the morning, and casualties of one man killed and seven wounded.

<sup>1</sup> "Regt. No. 122", p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> This was the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*.

<sup>3</sup> The right of the *XIII. Corps*.

<sup>4</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 10. Boullaire, pp. 60-1.

18 Oct.

18TH OCTOBER. THE GERMAN ATTACK ON THE  
BELGIAN ARMY

## THE BATTLE OF THE YSER

On this day the Germans began the battle of the Yser, the troops of the *III. Reserve Corps* (Beseler) attacking the Belgian outposts east of the river. Map 7.  
Sketch 1.

In anticipation of the German offensive, the Belgian divisions had been disposed as follows:—

The 6th and 5th Divisions held the line from the left of the French Territorial divisions near Boesinghe along the Ypres Canal to Dixmude. In the Dixmude bridgehead was Admiral Ronarc'h's Naval Brigade, supported by artillery of the Belgian 3rd Division, with the rest of the division in reserve at Lampernisse, four miles west of Dixmude. Next on the left came in succession the 4th, 1st and 2nd Divisions along the Yser to Nieuport, with advanced posts on the east bank at Beerst, Keyem, Schoore and Mannekensvere—all about a mile from the Yser—and a bridgehead including Lombartzyde and Westende, covering Nieuport. In reserve in the northern sector in front of Furnes was the 2nd Cavalry Division.<sup>1</sup>

Below its junction with the Ypres Canal, the Yser is from fourteen to twenty yards wide, and five to ten feet deep; it is canalized and has embankments on both sides, the western commanding the eastern by a little over six feet. The whole region between Boesinghe and the sea is low-lying pasture fields, part of it, indeed, below sea level at high tide: streams, canals and ditches intersect it. The Dixmude—Nieuport railway is barely six feet, and the roads are even less above the general level. Passage over the canal and the river is only possible at the permanent bridges, which are two to three miles apart, and are situated at Steenstraat (two miles below Boesinghe), Drie Grachten, Dixmude (two), Tervaeete, Schoorbakke, St. Georges and Nieuport. At Nieuport were locks and sluices—entirely rebuilt since the war—designed to let river water away and drain the country at low tide, and keep sea water out at high tide.

On the 18th October the German *III. Reserve Corps* in a most determined manner attacked the Belgian line

<sup>1</sup> The 1st Cavalry Division was operating with the French. These and other particulars are taken from the Belgian Staff account.

between Dixmude and the sea. "The men knew they were on the decisive wing of the attack, and they pushed ahead everywhere regardless of loss."<sup>1</sup> They succeeded in capturing the advanced posts of Keyem and Schoore, and part of Mannekensvere, but were not able to cross the river as ordered. In the defence of the sector the Belgians were assisted by the fire of a flotilla under Admiral Hood, consisting of two light cruisers, two monitors and some destroyers, supported by some French units. "These warships shelled the German troops along the coast as far as Middelkerke (five miles from Nieuport) and subsequently during the whole battle furnished valuable support to the defence."<sup>2</sup> The material effect of naval heavy shells, according to German accounts, was small, as they broke up into a few large fragments, but "the moral effect on the troops was great",<sup>3</sup> and the commander of the *III. Reserve Corps*, we are told, "decided not to allow the *4th Ersatz Division* to cross the Yser at Nieuport, on account of the heavy fire from the British naval guns".<sup>4</sup> Nieuport, in any case, remained in Belgian hands, and with it the locks that controlled the inlet of sea water, without possession of which it would have been impossible to create the inundations used later to cover the Belgian front.

#### INTELLIGENCE OF THE ENEMY

The intelligence that came in during the day was of a somewhat conflicting nature as regards movements behind the enemy's line. From the air, many roads and areas were reported clear of large bodies of troops; on the road west of Thielt (10 miles E.N.E. of Roulers) a column of cavalry and guns, three miles long, was observed, but only at Audenarde<sup>5</sup> (on the Schelde, 22 miles E.S.E. of Roulers) did there seem to be considerable activity, with troops in the streets and transport visible on all the open spaces.<sup>6</sup> A long column of troops and train was observed on the road leading north from Thourout (7 miles N.N.W. of Roulers) to Ostend.<sup>7</sup> At Courtrai (10 miles south-east of

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> "Belgian General Staff", p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Behr [Staff Officer of the German *5th Reserve Division*, which was shelled], p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> The Oudenarde of Marlborough.

<sup>6</sup> *XXVII. Reserve Corps*.

<sup>7</sup> Part of *III. Reserve Corps* going north.



Roulers) only a few cavalry and infantry were seen.<sup>1</sup> 18 Oct. Early in the morning, however, information came from the Belgian General Staff, and was confirmed by the French, that certain large new formations, composed of a mixture of young men and old, had been detained south-west of Brussels, and were moving forward. The advanced guard of one of them, probably a corps, as eight different regimental numbers, including some over 240, had been noted, had reached Courtrai on the 17th.<sup>2</sup> Soon after midday further information was received of considerable German concentrations and railway movements at Courtrai (7 miles north-east of Menin), and of some new formations having reached Aerseele (14 miles east of Roulers).<sup>3</sup> The three divisions of the *III. Reserve Corps* were all identified opposite the Belgians.

The general impression left by the day's operations and news was that the enemy was holding an entrenched position west of Lille up to Menin, and passing the *III. Reserve Corps* to the north—possibly with a view to defeating the Belgians, turning the Allied left flank and occupying the coast ports—whilst some second class troops were being moved up to take its place in the general line. There were still hopes, and more than hopes, that the arrival of the *I. Corps* in the north would change the situation in favour of the Allies.

## SITUATION ON THE NIGHT OF 18TH/19TH OCTOBER

The situation of the Allied Armies in Flanders on the night of the 18th October, the eve of the battle of Ypres, was :—

## II. Corps.

5th Division	. .	La Bassée Canal bridge $\frac{3}{4}$ mile east of Givenchy—Canteleux—Violaines—Beau Puits.
3rd Division	. .	West of Illies—Herlies—Aubers.
Conneau's Cavalry Corps (3 divisions)	. .	Fromelles—Le Maisnil.

Map 9,  
Sketch 5  
for II.  
Corps.  
Map 10  
and  
Sketch 4  
for other  
British  
troops.

## III. Corps.

6th Division	. .	Radinghem — Ennetières — Prémésques—Epinette.
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<sup>1</sup> *XXVIII. Reserve Corps* advanced guard.

<sup>2</sup> This was correct, see "Ypres", p. 8. It was the head of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*.

<sup>3</sup> *XXIII. Reserve Corps*.



4th Division	. .	Road one mile north-east of Epinette—Pont Rouge.
Cavalry Corps.		
1st Cavalry Division	. .	Opposite Deulemont to Halte on railway one mile north.
2nd Cavalry Division	. .	Railway north of Deulemont to Tenbrielen.
IV. Corps.		
7th Division	. .	Zandvoorde — Terhand — Waterdamhoek.
3rd Cavalry Division	. .	Passchendaele—Oostnieuwkerke.
Bidon's Group.		
Sketch 5. de Mitry's Cavalry Corps		Roulers—Staden—Cortemarek.
87th Territorial Division		One brigade Passchendaele (with detachment supporting de Mitry)—Ypres.
89th Territorial Division		On right bank of canal Ypres to Boesinghe.
Belgian Army	. . .	Boesinghe to Nieuport (with a division and a cavalry division in reserve, and the French Naval Brigade at Dixmude).

The front occupied by the British II., III. and IV. and Cavalry Corps—that is five divisions and three cavalry divisions, with three French cavalry divisions between the II. and III. Corps—was thirty-five miles. This gave for defence roughly six miles to each division and six hundred yards to each cavalry brigade.

There were in reserve :—

#### I. Corps.

19th Brigade	. .	Vlamertinghe.
2nd Division	. .	Between Hazebrouck and Poperinghe.
1st Division	. .	Detraining near Hazebrouck.

#### Indian Corps.

Lahore Division (less Sirhind Brigade left in Egypt)	. . .	En route by train for neighbourhood of St. Omer from Orleans. (It entrained on 18th October.)
Meerut Division	. . .	At Marseilles, where it remained till 19th October.

Owing to the capture on an "English field officer" of

a written order for the attack, the German *Fourth Army* 18 Oct. was accurately informed on the 18th of the disposition of the British forces and in detail of that of the 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division.<sup>1</sup>

The losses of the British in Flanders between the 9th and 18th had been a little over 4,500, of which, roughly, 2,600 were in the II. Corps and 1,550 in the III., the others being equally divided between the 7th Division and the Cavalry Corps.

On the battle-front from Belfort on the borders of Switzerland to La Bassée both adversaries were settling down to trench warfare. Except on the northern flank in Flanders there had been no important change for some time, and no serious combat, other than an unsuccessful attempt of the Germans, at the end of September, to break through east of Rheims.

## NOTE I.

GERMAN OPERATIONS IN FLANDERS FROM FALL OF ANTWERP TO THE 18TH OCTOBER 1914<sup>2</sup>

On the capture of Antwerp on the 9th October, and the discovery next day that the Belgian Army had escaped, the *III. Reserve Corps* (5th and 6th Reserve Divisions, with the 4th Ersatz Division now added) was, after a further delay of twenty-four hours, sent in pursuit westwards. It had instructions to advance on Bruges—Ghent and then to the coast Blankenberghe—Ostend. General von Beseler assembled his corps at its first objective on the 14th. Map 5.

During the closing hours of the siege of Antwerp the German Supreme Command had taken an important decision. In view of the new situation which would be created by the fall of the fortress and of the reports of Allied concentrations in the area Lille—Dunkirk, it ordered the formation in Belgium of a new *Fourth Army*, under Duke Albrecht of Württemberg, composed of four recently organized Reserve corps, the *XXII.*, *XXIII.*, *XXVI.* and *XXVII.*<sup>3</sup> This Army was to win the war “by successfully closing with the “enemy, who was still engaged in the concentration and reorganization of his forces, and by gaining Calais, the aim and object of the “1914 campaign”.<sup>4</sup> With the *III. Reserve Corps* on its right it was to make a decisive break-through against the Allied left flank from Menin to the sea.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> German *Fourth Army* Intelligence Summary of Reports, Ghent, 18th October 1914. This was confirmed on the 19th by the discovery of a notebook of a dead English officer, and from some prisoners taken near Rollegheemappelle (midway between Menin and Roulers). Communicated by the *Reichsarchiv*, Berlin. The loss of “a field officer” at this time cannot be traced.

<sup>2</sup> See “Ypres”, pp. 1-12, “Poseek” and regimental accounts.

<sup>3</sup> See Note II. on the *Reserve Corps* of 1914 below.

<sup>4</sup> “Ypres”, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> “Ypres”, p. 8.

Map 7.

By an order issued on the 14th October, the *Sixth Army*, on the line La Bassée—Armentières—Menin, was directed to remain entirely on the defensive until the attack of the new *Fourth Army* had begun to take effect. The *Sixth Army* had come into line gradually, as it replaced the cavalry on the northern flank :—first the *VII. Corps* from La Bassée northward to near Armentières ; then, on the 15th October, the *XIX.* on the right about Armentières, with the *XIII.* further to the right again, from Warneton to Menin. The two former corps were reduced to such straits by the attack of the II. and III. Corps that, as we shall see, the *XIII. Corps* had to be sent south on the night 18th/19th against the right of the III. Corps and left of the II. Corps.

Map 6.

The transport of the new corps of the *Fourth Army* to the Western Front began on the 10th October ; by the 13th their detrainment was in full progress west and south-west of Brussels ; and on the 14th they began their advance westwards in four columns to the line Eecloo (15 miles east of Bruges)—Deynze—Wortegem (4 miles west of Audenarde). The movement was covered by the three divisions of the *III. Reserve Corps*, which, as the *Fourth Army* advanced, were to clear its front by concentrating to the north, and then become its right wing.

On the 15th the *III. Reserve Corps* was on the line Roulers—Thourout—Ostend and was directed not to advance further for a few days, so as not to draw the attention of the Allies prematurely to movements in the north ; but on the 16th a detachment attacked Dixmude.

On the 16th October the railways westward from Brussels to Grammont (22 miles W.S.W. of Brussels) and Ghent were opened to traffic ; whether the advance had been delayed until the repair of the railways was approaching completion, or whether the new corps could not have been put into the field before the 14th has not yet been ascertained.

On the 17th the heads of the *XXII.*, *XXIII.*, *XXVI.* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps* reached a line about twenty miles from the Yser, defined by a point six miles east of Courtrai—Thielt—Oostcamp (just south of Bruges), and the *III. Reserve Corps*, having fulfilled its first task successfully, drew away to the north and on the 18th attacked the Belgians.

On the evening of the 18th October, the day on which the French took Roulers and the 7th Division should have advanced on Menin, the four new Reserve corps were in their appointed positions on a line Courtrai to Thourout, 17 to 10 miles respectively from the Allies on the Ypres—Yser line. Their front was already partially wheeled south-westwards preparatory to outflanking the Allies, but the *III. Reserve Corps*, which should have been across the Yser, abreast of Furnes, ready to make the passage easy for the rest of the *Fourth Army*, was held up by the Belgians well to the east of the river. Thus the first enemy move had failed.

The situation of the German forces opposite the British on the night of the 18th October is shown, from La Bassée to Armentières, on Sketch 5<sup>1</sup> and northward of this on Sketch 4. Those opposite the Belgians are shown on Sketch 6. The *XXIV. Reserve Corps* and *IV. Cavalry Corps* were near Lille. The *Marine Division* was at Bruges and on the coast.

<sup>1</sup> The situation is the same as on the 19th.



The decision to engage the new corps in Flanders has been much criticized in Germany. Falkenhayn<sup>1</sup> has explained at length the reason for it. Shortly, it was that the corps were insufficient to turn the scale in the Russian theatre—where the Austro-Hungarian High Command, supported by Hindenburg, had asked for about thirty divisions—but might do so in the West. In the East, Falkenhayn decided, a delaying action must be fought until the French, British and Belgians had been settled with. The question of time compelled the employment of the corps in Flanders; for calculation of transport tables showed that it was not possible, by an offensive at some other place, to forestall the Allied attack which was known to be developing in the Yser area. Similar calculations proved that there was not time to exchange the young troops of the new Reserve corps for tried formations, and put them on a quiet front. Probably the chief reason for the decision was that “the prize to be won was worth the stake”. If the German Army could succeed in throwing the Allies back across the Yser and following them up, there would be a complete and favourable change in the situation on the Western Front; the danger of the Germans being finally cut off from the coast and their right enveloped would be averted; the arrangements in preparation to interfere with England’s sea traffic by submarines and attack her at home with aeroplanes and airships would have time to develop; <sup>2</sup> and it would leave in the hands of the Supreme Command the initiative either to pursue the success in Flanders, if it seemed worth while, or to turn against Russia.

## NOTE II.

## THE GERMAN RESERVE CORPS OF 1914

On the 16th August, the formation was ordered of five new Prussian Reserve corps numbered *XXII.* to *XXVI.*, a combined Saxon and Württemberg corps, the *XXVII.*, and the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*. The divisions differed from the Active ones in that they had only 9 field batteries instead of 12. According to the Great General Staff,<sup>3</sup> 75 per cent of the new corps consisted of volunteers, untrained men over or under military age, the remainder being fully trained men—reservists, *Landwehr* and *Landsturm*. Lieutenant-General Balck, who commanded the *51st Reserve Division* of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, gives the following account of its formation.<sup>4</sup> Each new battalion received as cadre a company of an *Ersatz* battalion, 300 strong, consisting of trained men of the older

<sup>1</sup> “Falkenhayn”, pp. 25-30.

<sup>2</sup> The *Marine Division*, under Admiral Schröder, after the fall of Antwerp and the retirement of the Belgians to the Yser, had taken over the defence of the Flemish coast and the organization of the offensive measures mentioned in the text. From the German coast defences were despatched to it:—guns, torpedo tubes, boats for mine laying, wireless installations, aeroplanes and airship sheds. From 1915, onwards, it was augmented by the addition of flotillas of destroyers, torpedo boats and motor boats, and dirigibles. The *2nd Marine Division* was formed on the 15th November 1914 and the *3rd* in April 1917. See “Das Marine Korps in Flandern”.

<sup>3</sup> “Ypres”, pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> “Kriegserfahrungen”.



classes. This provided about 75 men for each of the four companies.<sup>1</sup> The volunteers were mostly of the well-educated classes and between 17 and 20; only a few were over 30. There was no lack of them. One of these volunteers has written that only after standing for weeks in front of barracks and in regimental offices could he get enlisted.<sup>2</sup> The great difficulty was to provide officers. In one infantry regiment, of which General Balek gives details, the regimental and battalion commanders and the four adjutants were Regulars; of the twelve company leaders, eight were Reserve or *Landwehr* officers, three were on the retired list, and only one had been an Active captain. The platoon commanders were *Offizierstellvertreter*, that is, fully trained candidates who were awaiting their commissions. The N.C.O.'s were all from the Reserve and mostly schoolmasters.

The artillery was not so well off as the infantry. Of the 82 officers required for the *51st Reserve Division*, only two were Regulars, the remainder were "officer-substitutes", and promoted N.C.O.'s. The average cadre of trained men for a battery consisted of four N.C.O.'s, four drivers and nine gunners. Nevertheless the percentage of trained men in a division was vastly higher than in the new formations raised in the British Empire.

The training consisted of fourteen days at a recruit depot, ten days' platoon or equivalent training, and then company or battery training. The division moved out as a body to a divisional training ground in the middle of September.

General Balek says of his division:—"Boundless enthusiasm "could not compensate for insufficient training. In consequence, the "young flower of the nation suffered heavy loss." Of the thirteen reserve divisions thus raised, ten came to Flanders, two went to Russia and one to Lorraine. Ludendorff comments that "the *XXV. Reserve Corps* (sent to him in Russia) was not able to effect any "appreciable change in the situation. . . . An Army is not made "in a few weeks, long training and tradition are required. . . . "Courage and devotion could not make up for lack of training."<sup>3</sup>

In November 1914, five further Reserve corps, *XXVIII.* to *XXXI.* and the *II. Bavarian Reserve Corps*, were ordered to be raised. In this case, battalions were formed by diluting existing three battalion infantry regiments with recruits, and a similar procedure was adopted for other arms. These new corps were ready for the field in January 1915.

<sup>1</sup> "Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 17" (of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*), p. 9, says the regiment was formed of one-third trained men of three Regular regiments, and two-thirds of volunteers and *Ersatz* reservists. "Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 247", p. 2, states that two-thirds were young men, *Ersatz* reservists and war volunteers, the remaining third consisted mostly of *Landwehr* with a smaller number of men of the Active army and Reserve, mostly N.C.O.'s.

<sup>2</sup> Junger, "Im Stahlgewitter", p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ludendorff, "My War Memories", ii. p. 76.





## CHAPTER V

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES<sup>1</sup>

THE FIRST PHASE :—THE ENCOUNTER BATTLE ; THE FRANCO-BRITISH ATTEMPT TO ADVANCE, AND THE GENERAL ATTACK OF THE GERMAN *FOURTH* AND *SIXTH* ARMIES

19TH TO 21ST OCTOBER 1914

(Maps 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 ; Sketches A, 4, 8, 6)

#### THE PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS

THE operations which took place on the Yser and around Ypres from the 19th October until the middle of November

Map 7.  
Sketch 6.

<sup>1</sup> It has been found impossible in describing the fighting round Ypres in October and November 1914 to adhere rigidly to the limits fixed in the "Report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee, 9th July 1920". According to this, four battles took place simultaneously during October-November 1914.

Map 1.

Boundary : the road Beuvry—Béthune.

Battle of La Bassée, 10th October-2nd November 1914.

Boundary : the line Estaires—Fournes.

Battle of Armentières, 13th October-2nd November 1914.

Boundary : the river Douve (which enters the Lys at Warneton).

Battle of Messines, 12th October-2nd November 1914.

Boundary : the Comines—Ypres Canal.

The Battles of Ypres 1914, 19th Oct.-22nd Nov. 1914.

Battle of Langemark, 21st-24th October ;

„ Gheluvelt, 29th-31st October ;

„ Nonne Bosschen (4 miles east of Ypres), 11th November.

Boundary : Steenstraat (1 mile south-west of Bixschoote)—Bixschoote—southern edge of Houthulst Forest.

The II. Corps battle of La Bassée can be dealt with as a separate action, although it ought not to be dissociated from the operations of the 6th Division (III. Corps) immediately to the north in what is officially called the southern part of the battle of Armentières. The fighting on the front Armentières—Messines—Ypres does not, however, form three separate battles ; it falls rather into two separate parts : first, the offensive of the British III. Corps and Cavalry Corps 12th-18th October, already related, before which the Germans fell back, and, secondly, the encounter with the great offensive of the German *Fourth* and *Sixth* Armies 19th October to



1914, known as the battle of the Yser<sup>1</sup> and the first battle of Ypres, formed the continuation and final phase of the "Race to the Sea". These operations were for each belligerent the outcome of a definite plan of attack against the northern flank of his opponent: the French and British against the German extreme right flank, and the German against the Allied extreme left flank. Unfortunately, as throughout the "Race to the Sea", the Allies "were always twenty-four hours and an army corps behind the enemy",<sup>2</sup> sometimes more. Thus, instead of being able to outflank and envelop the foe, the French, Belgian and British Armies in the north were themselves for many days in October and November 1914 in imminent danger of being broken and rolled up. The period was one of the most momentous and critical of the war, and only by the most desperate fighting did the Allies succeed in maintaining their front. Had they given ground on the scale they did after the Battle of the Frontiers in August 1914, or even in March and April 1918, the whole of Belgian territory must have been lost, and the Germans would have reached Dunkirk and Calais—which were, indeed, their objectives. If these ports had fallen to the enemy the effect on our sea communications and on operations

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22nd November. This offensive from the 30th October onward was bounded on the south by the river Lys near Armentières. The battles of Armentières and Messines from 19th October onwards form part and parcel of the battles of Ypres 1914 just as much as Langemark or Gheluvelt. From the 19th to the 29th October the front Fournes (north-east of La Bassée) to Houthulst Forest, and from the 30th October to 22nd November the front river Lys to Houthulst Forest, form indivisible battle fronts.

The river Douve is not an appropriate boundary; it is not even the constant dividing line between the III. Corps and the Cavalry Corps. Nor is the Comines Canal suitable. In the great offensives of Fabeck's *Army Group* on 30th and 31st October, and of the *Sixth Army* on 11th November, this canal actually ran through the centre of the front of attack, even through the middle of a German corps, and historically cannot be treated as a battle boundary. Nor can the date of 2nd November be accepted as terminating the heavy fighting south of the Comines Canal.

From the 19th October, therefore, the chapters following will deal with two main actions: The Battles of Ypres 1914 and the Battle of La Bassée.

The German Official "S. und G." allots three battle names to this period:

The Battle of Lille (British La Bassée—Armentières—Messines), 15th to 28th October;

The Battle of the Yser (Gheluvelt to the sea, attack of the *Fourth Army*), 18th to 30th October.

The Battle of Ypres (the Lys to Polygon Wood, attack of Fabeck's *Army Group* and the *Sixth Army*), 30th October to 24th November.

<sup>1</sup> The name given to the fighting between the Belgians and the Germans,

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires du Général Galliéni", p. 197.

generally might well have proved fatal not only to the 19 Oct. British Empire, but to the whole of the civilized world.

There were troops of three nations defending Flanders, but no arrangements whatever for unity of command. General Foch, "commandant le groupe des Armées du Nord", was charged by General Joffre with the direction of the French forces in the north. Nominally he had no command over the Belgian and British Armies operating there, and officially he could do no more than forward to their commanders copies of the orders issued to his own troops, and make suggestions for co-operation. As a matter of fact, his influence was considerable; and his proposals, so far as means allowed, were carried out by the Allied Armies without waste of time and without friction of any kind. French and Belgians, and French and British, as circumstances required—and as far as difference of training, war material and language permitted—fought side by side and sometimes as one Army.

General Foch's plan <sup>1</sup> at this time contemplated for the Allied Armies an advance eastwards from Ypres—Nieuport towards Roulers—Thourout—Ghistelles (5 miles south of Ostend) in order to break the enemy's front and separate General von Beseler's *III. Reserve Corps*, lately at Antwerp and now following up the Belgians, from the main German forces. This accomplished, the Belgian Army and the French left were to endeavour to drive Beseler against the coast, whilst the rest of the French Army in the north, with the British, were to wheel south-east, in the direction of the Lys from Menin to Ghent (30 miles north-east of Menin), force the passage of this river, and attack the main German forces in flank and in reverse.

Map 7.  
Sketch 6.

It was never possible to put this plan into execution, but it forms the clue to the general operations of the Allies in the north. The Belgian Army, reduced and exhausted by nearly three months' continuous fighting and movement, was not in a condition to take the offensive; the German attacks made on it were so heavy and so serious indeed, that, far from the Belgians giving assistance, a French division had to be sent to reinforce them. But apart from this, the enemy had the advantage both of initiative and of numbers. Thus it happened that the French and British forces brought up for the offensive had to be thrust in piecemeal as they arrived at Ypres in order to maintain the front; the Allies were forced to

<sup>1</sup> General d'Urbal in the "Revue Militaire Générale", January 1921.

daily improvisations ; and it was not possible to adhere to and carry through any settled plan. Though the offensive remained the guiding principle in the minds of General Foch and Sir John French, it was the German not the Allied attacks which marked the different phases of the battle. The first British and French attacks led to a "battle of encounter", and then the Allies were thrown on the defensive.

The German plan was somewhat similar to that of the Allies. It was, whilst attacking all along the line, to pierce the Belgian front, and then wheeling south-west to out-flank and roll up the Allied line, and at the same time to secure the coast ports. "From the coast it was hoped to "obstruct England's Channel traffic, effectively attack the "island itself, and turn the French flank."<sup>1</sup> Failing to break in north of Ypres against the Belgians, the enemy made desperate attempts against the British, first east and then south-east of Ypres, until the battle died away. The German General Staff for a time asserted that "the first "battle of Ypres was a German victory, for it marked the "failure of the enemy's intention to fall on the rear of our "Western Armies, to free the rich districts of Northern "France and the whole of Belgium",<sup>2</sup> but it is now admitted that it was a *Miserfolg*, a failure, "to which the "subsequent difficult situation of Germany must to a great "extent be attributed".<sup>3</sup>

### THE COUNTRY ROUND YPRES

Map 2.  
Sketch A.

A general description of Flanders has already been given,<sup>4</sup> but certain features—some of them now obliterated—of the country round Ypres must be pointed out in more detail. The town itself—in 1914 possessing 2,354 houses and 16,700 inhabitants engaged in the manufacture of ribbons, Valenciennes lace, cotton and soap—is surrounded by strong earthen ramparts faced with brick, and on the eastern and southern sides by a broad wet ditch.<sup>5</sup> Standing at a corner of the coast plain, at the junction of the Comines and Yser (Yperlee) Canals, it is

<sup>1</sup> Falkenhayn, pp. 27, 28, where an appreciation of the situation will be found.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Foerster's "Graf Schlieffen und der Weltkrieg", Part II. p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> This same moat was in existence, according to an old map, when the Bishop of Norwich unsuccessfully besieged Ypres in 1383.



overlooked on the south by the Kemmel heights and on the east by a low line of hills running south-west to north-east, marked by Wytschaete—Hill 60 (east of Verbrandenmolen)—Hooge—Polygon Wood<sup>1</sup>—Passchendaele. The summit of this latter ridge at Wytschaete is 7,000 yards from the town; near Hollebeke this distance is reduced to 4,000 yards; at Polygon Wood it is again 7,000, whence it gradually trends away. Its height above the general level of the plain gradually decreases from about one hundred and fifty feet at Wytschaete, to about one hundred feet where the road between Hooge and Gheluvelt crosses it, and to about seventy feet at Passchendaele. Its slopes are very gentle, almost imperceptible, except near Zonnebeke, where the gradient is 1 in 33: from Hooge eastwards, it is 1 in 60; towards Hollebeke, 1 in 75. Its height and slopes, however, give no impression of its domination over "the Salient". The ridge was, as was often said, the "rim of a saucer", with Ypres in the middle of the saucer, and those inside felt that they could do nothing without being observed. Possession of the ridge offers to a belligerent attacking Ypres from that quarter the fullest opportunities, on the one hand, for ground observation and enfilade and convergent artillery fire, and, on the other hand, for screening his batteries from enemy notice and for bringing up reinforcements and supplies unseen.

Several well-marked spurs extend from the east side of the main ridge: notably that of Messines, which projects nearly two miles south-eastwards from Wytschaete, and forms a barrier across the approach to Kemmel from Wervicq, Comines and Warneton; so important is it that it was known as a ridge and not as a mere spur. It has a gentle fall to the east, but a 1 in 10 slope on the reverse side. South of it, and separated from it by the valley of the small, but muddy-bottomed Douve, lie Ploegsteert Wood and Hill 63. The Wulverghem (Spanbroeckmolen) spur is parallel to and west of Messines ridge; the Oosttaverne spur lies due east of Wytschaete; and there are others running towards Gheluvelt, Becelacre and Keiberg. Stretching out further than these spurs, and connected to them by saddles, are the swells of higher ground at Zandvoorde, Kruisecke, Terhand and Moorslede. In general, southward of Ypres the ground is a series of small ridges and depressions, while northward it gradually flattens out and becomes featureless.

<sup>1</sup> Polygone on some maps.



The ridge in 1914 was dotted with woods, forming an almost continuous chain from Wytschaete to Zonnebeke and giving excellent cover from view. Some of these, like Polygon Wood and those later known by the names of Battle Wood, Shrewsbury Forest, Sanctuary Wood, were of considerable size. Nearly all contained, besides trees of medium size, considerable undergrowth.<sup>1</sup> Between them there was often cultivated land, without a shred of cover sometimes for eight hundred to one thousand yards. Some seven miles north of Ypres lay the great Houthulst Forest, which, abandoned by the French cavalry<sup>2</sup> in a single day, became in German hands a veritable "Feste" or super-fortress.

The lower ground west of the ridge was partly grass fields and partly cultivated. It was intersected by small streams—some taking their rise in the three large lakes, Dickebusch, Zillebeke and Bellewaarde—and drainage ditches leading towards the canals. The Comines—Ypres Canal was a narrow waterway, some eighteen feet wide, which, owing to landslides, had never been open to traffic. The Yperlee Canal, north of Ypres, was about twice as wide and in use. Between the fields there were often high hedges as well as ditches, and these with isolated trees in the hedgerows assisted to obstruct the view when the leaf was on, as it was in October 1914. At all seasons the country was difficult for mounted arms.

The roads, except the few main ones radiating from Ypres, were merely mud tracks. Along them, besides the villages and occasional chateaux, were numerous isolated houses.<sup>3</sup>

The ground as a whole was more suited to independent infantry action than a combined operation, and, in any case, favoured the better-trained troops. It offered more advantages to the defence than to the attack; guns could

<sup>1</sup> The woods were of various natures :—

Ploegsteert Wood contained oak, larch, poplar and beech, with undergrowth of hazel, alder, birch, oak and maple.

Wytschaete Wood : oak, ash, elm and beech, with undergrowth of chestnut, hazel, maple, alder, ash and birch.

Nonne Bosschen : oak, with undergrowth.

Shrewsbury Forest : pine, oak, beech, Canadian poplar, with undergrowth of oak, chestnut, birch, alder, poplar and maple.

Polygon Wood : pines, with undergrowth of beech, oak and chestnut.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Langemarck was the most important village, with 7,438 inhabitants; Zonnebeke, Becelaere and Wytschaete had between 3,000 and 4,000; Neuve Eglise, 2,311; Zillebeke, 2,081, and Gheluvelt, 1,611; the rest were below 1,600.

be easily hidden; and though observation was most difficult, yet, by concentrating fire on the open spaces, artillery could, and did, make the advance of large bodies of troops almost impossible. The screens provided by woods made it easy to hide reserves and move them unseen to almost any quarter where they were required; good shooting and mobility were therefore of special value. The great drawbacks of the region from the Allies' point of view were that once the enemy got a footing on the ridge he looked down on all the country westward of it, and that the roads from the positions covering Ypres, practically all converged on the town, and thence were limited to the one good road via Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe. This was not only a defile, but was exposed to fire from the ridge, and it was hardly sufficient to cope with the requirements of the Allied Forces during the battles. North and south past the town ran the canal, which, in case of retreat, would have to be crossed, so that it became immediately necessary to increase the number of passages over it.

19TH OCTOBER

#### COLLISION WITH THE NEW GERMAN FORCES

##### THE IV. CORPS AND THE LEFT. THE ATTEMPT OF THE 7TH DIVISION TO ADVANCE ON MENIN

On the front of the III. Corps and Allenby's cavalry corps there was no change during the 19th October. The advance of eleven columns of the German *Fourth Army* towards Ypres—Nieuport stopped the projected attack of the 7th Division on Menin and forced the left of the 7th Division, the British 3rd Cavalry Division and de Mitry's cavalry corps to fall back slightly, in succession from left to right. The weather was dull all day, making aeroplane work and artillery observation difficult.

A message, despatched from G.H.Q. at 8.30 P.M. on the 18th,<sup>1</sup> merely prescribed the continuance on the 19th of the vigorous offensive ordered on the previous day. It drew special attention to the paragraph which had ordered the IV. Corps to move on Menin. This place, from its situation on the Lys, was naturally of importance, whether a further advance of the III. Corps was made down the Lys valley at once, or a general wheel to the south-east

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 23.

Map 12.  
Sketch 4.

across the Lys was attempted by the British Expeditionary Force later on. The I. Corps and 19th Brigade, the former assembling near Hazebrouck and the latter at Vlamerhinghe in reserve, were not to move. In view of the operations, Sir John French henceforward made Bailleul his advanced headquarters, nearly every day from 10 A.M. to 4.30 P.M.

In the IV. Corps the morning of the 19th opened satisfactorily. Reconnaissances made the previous evening by an armoured car furnished good information as to how the German line near Menin was held. Sir Henry Rawlinson therefore ordered the 7th Division to move to its attack early.<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Cavalry Division was to cover its left and connect with the French cavalry which, whilst holding Roulers and the northern and eastern exits of the Forest of Houthulst securely, was to reconnoitre eastward towards Thourout.<sup>2</sup> By arrangement with General Allenby, the 2nd Cavalry Division and two armoured trains sent by G.H.Q. were to protect the right of the 7th Division.

General Capper placed his three brigades in line, the 20th Brigade on the right near Kruseecke, the 21st next to it near Terhand, and the 22nd opposite Dadizeele. The division thus faced south-east towards Menin with a front of about eight thousand yards. On its left were the 6th and 7th Cavalry Brigades, with Commander Samson's armoured cars, which by 7 A.M. were near St. Pieter (3,000 yards north of Dadizeele), whilst the 2nd Cavalry Division sent one regiment to Tenbrielen and another to America to protect its right.

In view of the enfilade fire from Wervicq on his right flank, General Capper decided to attack first with his left.<sup>3</sup> When the 22nd Brigade had taken the trenches on its front—they were the outpost trenches dug by the *XIII. Corps*—the other two brigades of the division were to capture Gheluwe and the whole 7th Division was then to advance against Menin.<sup>4</sup> This movement would naturally expose its left flank, in fact, would take the division across the front of the German advance about to be disclosed; but in view of the general nature of the intelligence reports received from G.H.Q., in particular that there were no Germans near Courtrai, it was thought in the 7th Division,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 24.

<sup>2</sup> Boullaire, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 25.

<sup>4</sup> At the time the main German position in the area was along the Lys, covered by an outpost position.



as the 3rd Cavalry Division and French cavalry were to the north, that the ordinary measures of flank protection by the divisional cavalry would meet the case on that flank.<sup>1</sup> 19 Oct.

The situation developing was, however, very different from what was supposed, as the events of the day quickly proved. Two German corps came in contact with the Belgians, and three more approached close to the French and British cavalry, and the 7th Division. As the enemy's blows first fell on the Allied left, on the Belgians, and then followed in succession southwards on the French and British, it will be convenient to deal with the operations in the same sequence.

Early in the morning the German *III. Reserve* and *XXII. Reserve Corps* attacked the Belgian advanced posts, on the east of the Yser, along the whole line from Lombartzyde to Beerst (2 miles north of Dixmude), and shelled Nieuport with heavy guns brought from Antwerp. To relieve the pressure that quickly became apparent, Belgian Headquarters ordered a counter-attack from Dixmude by the Belgian 5th Division and the French Naval Brigade against the enemy's left flank. This movement was at first successful: Vladsloo (2½ miles north-east of Dixmude) and Beerst were recaptured, but on account of information of the approach of strong German columns from Roulers and the retirement of the French cavalry on the Belgian right, orders were issued at 5.30 P.M. for the recall of the counter-attacking troops to the west bank of the Yser, so that the holding of the river line might be ensured. Thus in the Belgian sector on the 19th the German *XXII. Reserve Corps* closed up on the left of the *III. Reserve*, and the two corps were everywhere in contact with the Belgian Army. On the right of the Belgians General de Mitry's four cavalry divisions were gradually pressed back by the *XXIII. Reserve* and part of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, losing Roulers and Staden; and at night their outposts were in the Passchendaele—Westroosebeke—Houthulst—Zarren (3 miles north of Houthulst Forest) area, some four or five miles behind their positions of the previous day, but still east of Houthulst Forest.<sup>2</sup>

About 10.30 A.M. Sir Henry Rawlinson received a report

Map 12.

<sup>1</sup> The Intelligence had reported the advanced guard, probably of a corps at Courtrai on the 17th (see Chapter IV. p. 119), but this news, by some mischance, had not been passed on to formations. The daily "Intelligence Summary", though prepared, was not issued to the troops until a later date.

<sup>2</sup> Boullaire, p. 65.



from the 3rd Cavalry Division<sup>1</sup> that the 10th Hussars of the 6th Cavalry Brigade had taken Ledeghem (1½ miles east of Dadizeele), after considerable opposition,<sup>2</sup> but that the 7th Cavalry Brigade, on the left of the 6th, had become involved with the head of a strong hostile column<sup>3</sup> advancing from Iseghem (5 miles south-east of Roulers and 7 miles north-east of Ledeghem), and, with the French cavalry, had been forced to fall back. Other German forces from Iseghem and Ardoye (5 miles north-east of Roulers) were making a vigorous attack on the French cavalry.

About 10.30 A.M., also, reports of air reconnaissances reached the IV. Corps. They were to the effect that the head of a hostile column, estimated at a division, had reached Gulleghem (4 miles north-east of Menin),<sup>4</sup> that another strong column had reached Pitthem (6 miles north-east of Roulers),<sup>5</sup> and that there were other columns further east. Summed up, there were considerable forces on the front and approaching the left flank of the IV. Corps.

Meanwhile, in the 7th Division, the 22nd Brigade and XXII. Brigade R.F.A., under Br.-General Lawford,<sup>6</sup> had pushed steadily on. Towards noon the infantry, the 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers leading, had advanced nearly two miles, and was within assaulting distance of the German trenches south of Kezelberg (2,000 yards south-east of Dadizeele), a little more than two miles from Menin. Very heavy artillery fire and some infantry fire then began to strike the left flank and left rear of the 22nd Brigade. Almost simultaneously, at 1.5 P.M., General Capper received instructions from the IV. Corps, sent at 11.45 A.M., to abandon the attack on Menin for the present, on account of the information about the advance of the enemy columns already narrated. He therefore ordered the 22nd Brigade—sending it the assistance of an additional battery—to

<sup>1</sup> Two companies of the Queen's (22nd Brigade) had been sent up from the 7th Divisional reserve to help the cavalry.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 10th Hussars' war diary, the regiment drove the Germans back to the outskirts of the village, but, enemy reinforcements arriving, it had at 2.30 P.M. to retire on the main body of the brigade at Moorslede.

<sup>3</sup> According to the regimental history of the *Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 241*, p. 10, the head of the *53rd Reserve Division* was encountered.

<sup>4</sup> *54th Reserve Division of XXVII. Reserve Corps.*

<sup>5</sup> *46th Reserve Division of XXIII. Reserve Corps.* Pitthem is misspelt Ritthem on Map 1.

<sup>6</sup> The 7th Division, like others, was organized in temporary groups, each infantry brigade having guns attached to it, and the battle was mainly fought in these groups.

swing back, and from fronting south to face east, with its right on the 21st at Terhand, and its left on the 3rd Cavalry Division at Moorslede. There was naturally some confusion on this sudden alteration of the operation, but General Lawford managed to extricate his brigade from close contact with the enemy, and the division—whose losses had been just under two hundred, half of this total in the Welch Fusiliers—then remained until 4 P.M. awaiting the enemy's advance. None, however, took place.

About this time the 3rd Cavalry Division was compelled by enemy pressure and as a result of its left being uncovered by the forcing back of the French cavalry, to withdraw the 6th Cavalry Brigade from Moorslede to Passchendaele. Then, passing through the 7th, the 6th retired to Poelcappelle; and later the 7th withdrew to Zonnebeke, French Territorials taking over Passchendaele. The losses of the 3rd Cavalry Division had been 83.

On receiving information from General Byng of his intention to retire from Moorslede, General Capper withdrew the 22nd Brigade, so that the left of the 7th Division should not be exposed. In the evening, therefore, the division occupied a line from Zandvoorde eastwards to Kruseeche, whence it turned north and passed behind Becelaere to Zonnebeke and joined the line of the cavalry. Thus its left was some three and a half miles in rear of its starting place in the morning, and only by superhuman efforts during the night were the two 4.7-inch batteries (111th and 112th) dragged back through the mud that had already begun to be in evidence. The attempt at an Allied offensive, undertaken in the face of very superior numbers, had not prospered.

#### THE CAVALRY CORPS AND THE III. CORPS MAINTAIN THEIR POSITIONS

Passing further south, during the 19th October the Cavalry Corps on the right of the 7th Division afforded the latter flank protection, but was unable itself to advance. In the III. Corps likewise there was little to record; the German line was bombarded, and an attack on Frélinghien, as a first step in straightening out the line, was made by the 10th Brigade. Well supported by artillery, it succeeded in reaching the outskirts of the village, but the attack was not pressed further, as the corps commander did not consider that the gain of ground was worth the expenditure

Map 12.  
Sketch 4.

of life involved, and the news from the IV. Corps seemed to preclude for a time any prospect of further advance. The units of the 4th and 6th Divisions, therefore, devoted themselves mainly to the consolidation of their positions. III. Corps headquarters, however, were moved forward from Bailleul to Armentières.

Thus the situation on the British front on the evening of the 19th was practically the same as on the previous day, except on the extreme left, which had been driven in; but that a German attack by fresh forces was impending seemed evident.

#### THE I. CORPS IS ORDERED TO YPRES

The front held by the II., III., Cavalry and IV. Corps—some twenty-five miles—was much wider than their strength warranted; but Sir John French, though he considered using the I. Corps to reinforce them, decided that he must take the risk of the extended front and deal with the threatened turning movement against the Belgians. He therefore directed Sir Douglas Haig to move with the I. Corps, now completely detrained, to the north of Ypres. He judged on the evening of the 19th that the German reinforcements were principally directed against the line of the Lys and against the II. Corps at La Bassée, and that General Haig would probably not be opposed north of Ypres by much more than the *III. Reserve Corps*, which he knew to have suffered considerably in its previous operations, and perhaps one or two *Landwehr* divisions.<sup>1</sup>

The Intelligence summary prepared in the evening of the 19th thus depicted the situation north of the Lys:—  
 “It would seem likely that the *5th Reserve Division* and *4th Ersatz Division* are operating towards Dixmude, whilst the *17th [51st] Landwehr Division* may be the formation attacking west of Roulers.<sup>2</sup> The presence of the *45th Landwehr Division* is indicated at Bruges and the *44th Landwehr Division* has also been identified on the line Nieuport—Dixmude.”

“The other troops which have been mentioned have not been identified. The whole force of the enemy north of the Lys probably does not exceed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  corps.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Despatch of 20th November 1914.

<sup>2</sup> The new divisions had only come into action that day and their exact nomenclature—*Reserve* not *Landwehr*—was not known.

<sup>3</sup> The  $3\frac{1}{2}$  corps were made up by the *III. Reserve Corps*, counted as  $1\frac{1}{2}$  as it contained three divisions, and one division each of the four new



The examination of 24 prisoners taken by the III. Corps, 19 Oct. made late on the 19th, established the fact that the forces that had come into contact with the British 3rd Cavalry Division were the *46th Reserve Division* of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps* and the *52nd Reserve Division* of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, and that the second division of each corps was close up behind the leading one. This made the total of the enemy forces  $5\frac{1}{2}$  corps instead of  $3\frac{1}{2}$ .

During the 19th the 2nd Division was ordered towards Ypres and billeted in the area Poperinghe—Cassel—Mont des Cats. In the evening the Commander-in-Chief at a personal interview—still apparently distrusting the intelligence received—gave Sir Douglas Haig the following written instructions:—

“The enemy’s strength on the front Menin—Ostend is estimated at about a corps and no more. The I. Corps will advance via Thourout with the object of capturing Bruges. The enemy is to be attacked and driven on Ghent [25 miles south-east of Bruges]. The right of the I. Corps will pass through Ypres. After passing Ypres the G.O.C. I. Corps is to decide according to the situation whether to attack the enemy lying to the north or that portion of the hostile forces reported in the direction of Courtrai [6 miles north-east of Menin].

“During the advance the I. Corps will have the French cavalry on its left and the 3rd Cavalry Division [General Byng] on its right.”

By messages sent out at 9 P.M.,<sup>1</sup> the II. and III. Corps were ordered to continue their operations; the Cavalry Corps to maintain its position; the IV. Corps to arrange for the 7th Division to entrench its line, and the 3rd Cavalry Division to cover the advance of the I. Corps, and to capture Menin, if possible and if it could be done without uncovering the move of the I. Corps. The 19th Brigade was sent from Vlamertinghe to entrench a position between Fauquissart—Fleurbaix, that is in the gap between the II. and III. Corps where the flank of the II. Corps was threatened.<sup>2</sup> Sketch 5.

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Reserve corps. As the Flying Corps had been unable to gather any information as to the length of the four columns owing to bad weather, it was assumed, until more was known, that each column was one division, not two.

<sup>1</sup> Appendices 26 and 27.

<sup>2</sup> For German movements on 19th October see Note at end of Chapter.



20TH OCTOBER. THE FIRST DAY OF THE ATTACK OF  
THE GERMAN *SIXTH* AND *FOURTH* ARMIES

III. CORPS : LOSS OF ENNETIÈRES AND PRÉMESQUES

Map 13. Sketch 6. The 20th October was a day of hard fighting all along the line. In the Armentières—Ypres area the Germans attacked in very superior numbers, particularly on the right of the III. Corps, on the front of the 7th Division, and on that of the French and British cavalry to the left of the 7th Division. Thus the two flanks of the line in Flanders were slightly driven back, but otherwise the attacks were repulsed or kept at arm's length. The attack, it will be recalled, extended down to the II. Corps front near La Bassée and the French XXI. Corps beyond it, and the 2/Royal Irish Regiment was practically annihilated.<sup>1</sup> The situation was improved by the arrival of the I. Corps in the vicinity of Ypres. The day was dull, with drizzling rain until noon, after which there were heavy mists.

G.H.Q. orders for the 20th practically amounted to a continuation of the attack. To the commander of the III. Corps the news of the 19th seemed ominous; the Allied advance had been checked and there were obvious signs of a German turning movement. He therefore ordered his divisions to maintain their positions, and the artillery to fire, if an opportunity of killing enemy troops occurred. With a view to having his corps disposed in depth to meet emergencies, he directed that as many men as possible should be collected to build up local and divisional reserves, and that a number of supporting points—the strong points of later days—should be prepared behind the front line. Owing to German attacks, practically very little could be done to comply with General Pulteney's orders.

Map 13. Sketch 6. In the 6th Division, which held the line Radinghem—Ennetières — Prêmesques — Epinette, all three infantry brigades were attacked. Between 7 and 8 A.M. the British trenches were heavily shelled by guns and howitzers of all calibres up to 8-inch, and then German infantry began to advance by bounds, in lines of men at several paces' interval, covered by machine-gun fire, the firing opening at eight hundred to one thousand yards.

The chief attack fell upon the 18th Brigade (Br.-General Congreve), which, owing to its success of the 18th October,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 85.

held a salient in front of Ennetières in advance of the general line of the division. The scattered and broken nature of the line, merely the night positions of a series of advanced guards, mattered little when the III. Corps was moving forward, but now that it was on the defensive, the isolation of the battalions, though they were safe enough by day, was highly dangerous during the hours of darkness. 20 Oct.

The 18th Brigade, supported by the XXXVIII. Brigade R.F.A., had three battalions, the 2/Sherwood Foresters, 1/West Yorkshire and 1/East Yorkshire, in line occupying a very extensive front of about three miles, so that it was only held by platoons dotted at intervals along it. The main efforts of the Germans were directed against the right where La Vallée and Ennetières, which form one long village, were held as a salient by the Sherwood Foresters, who had relieved the Durham Light Infantry there on the night of the 18th. The battalion trenches were some fifty yards in front of the edge of the houses of the village, two companies facing east and two south.

The first German infantry attack was easily stopped by fire, and though shelling and infantry pressure continued all the morning, as the country was open and little cover was obtainable, the Germans only succeeded in gaining ground at a few isolated places.

By 9 A.M. all three battalions of the brigade in the front line were calling for support, and General Congreve, about 11 A.M., sent two companies of the reserve battalion, the Durham L.I., to the left and one company each to the centre and right.

At 1 P.M. a very determined attack was made on the Sherwood Foresters, and half the company of the D.L.I. placed at their disposal was sent up to Ennetières; but, in view of a threat against the right, this half company was withdrawn again behind the village as soon as the Germans were stopped. On the extreme right there were only five platoons of the Foresters holding a front of 1,500 yards to connect with the 16th Brigade. These platoons commanded all the ground on this front, but were actually out of sight of each other. At 3 P.M., in drizzling rain, the Germans resumed the attack against the right flank, and the half company of the D.L.I. previously employed was sent to reinforce it, and again the enemy was repulsed. The right flank was now subjected to severe enfilade—in fact almost reverse—shelling, from the north-

east, and just before dusk, in order to make this flank safer, the other half company of the D.L.I. was sent to a farm in rear of the right.

As it became dark, lines of Germans, estimated at three battalions, advancing very swiftly, broke through and entered Ennetières from the west and south-west, took the platoons of the right flank in rear and captured most of them. The survivors rallied on the XXXVIII. Brigade R.F.A., under Colonel R. F. Fox, near the windmill at the north-west end of La Vallée. Simultaneously a frontal attack was made at dusk on two companies of the Sherwood Foresters on the left wing in the trenches east of Ennetières, and the enemy got so close that it was decided to fall back to the other side of the village. The retirement was successfully carried out, but as the companies were re-forming in the dark at the cross roads between Ennetières and La Vallée, they were surprised and surrounded by the Germans who had come up from La Vallée and were at first mistaken for reinforcements.<sup>1</sup> The greater part of the Sherwood Foresters were captured, though some of them held out for a time in houses, and it was not until 5.15 A.M. next morning that the last remnant, two officers and about sixty men, surrendered.

The Germans made no attempt to exploit the success. But the situation of the West Yorkshire and East Yorkshire on the left of the Sherwood Foresters was now very precarious; they were ordered first to secure their right flank and, if possible, close the line; and later to withdraw to a line west of La Vallée—Chateau d'Hancardry (1 mile west of Prêmesques).

There is little wonder that the line of the 2/Sherwood Foresters was broken. That they had been overwhelmed by numbers after 48 hours' continuous fighting and entrenching was certain, but it was not until the publication of the German official record<sup>2</sup> that the actual forces engaged against them became known. The entry in this record is "20/10/14, storming of Ennetières—La Vallée 25th Reserve Division, 52nd Infantry Brigade (XIII. Corps)"; that is, three-quarters of the XIII. Corps were engaged.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was part of the reserve battalion, the 2nd, of the 122nd Regiment. The regimental record claims 576 prisoners on this day. "Regt. No. 122", p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> "S. und G.", p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> The final assault on La Vallée was made shortly before 6 P.M. Whilst the 9th, 10th, 1st and 4th Companies of the 122nd Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 125th Regiment attacked from the south, the 11th and 12th



These troops had been brought round from the front of 20 Oct. Allenby's cavalry corps on the Lys, where they had been replaced by the *IV. Cavalry Corps*, but, owing to the river intervening between the forces, no information of the change had reached the British. The British *III. Corps* had now practically the whole of both the *XIX.* and *XIII. Corps* opposite to it.<sup>1</sup>

South of the 18th Brigade, the 16th fared better. The 1/Buffs held the front line east of Radinghem, supported by the *XII. Brigade R.F.A.*, whilst the remainder of the brigade was preparing a second line half-way between the front and Bois Grenier.<sup>2</sup> In spite of shelling and a determined assault about 1 P.M., the Buffs held their own, only, after the disaster to the Sherwood Foresters, falling back to the edge of the village, where, by General Ingouville-Williams's orders, the battalion dug in. Later, it was sent back to the line prepared by the other battalions. Its opponents had been the *51st Infantry Brigade*, the remaining brigade of the *XIII. Corps* which attacked the front of the Sherwood Foresters.<sup>3</sup>

North of the 18th Brigade, the Leinsters, holding the front line of the 17th Brigade, Prêmesques—Epinette, had been fired on from 2 A.M. onwards. Then at 8 A.M., after heavy shelling for three-quarters of an hour, enemy infantry of the *24th Division* of the *XIX. Corps* stormed Prêmesques.

To this direction, therefore, the available reserves of the 6th Division were diverted, sadly denuding the strength of its right. The East Yorkshire on the right of the Leinsters sent first one and then a second company to their assistance. This stopped further German progress, but the first company was driven back by superior numbers,

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*Companies*, after getting through a gap in the extended British line, broke in from the west. The *2nd* and *3rd Companies* followed the *1st* and *4th*. Thus the actual attack was made by 2½ battalions, with a half battalion in reserve. Ennetières was attacked by units of the *25th Reserve Division*. The fourth brigade of the *XIII. Corps* was further south. "Regt. No. 122", p. 36.

<sup>1</sup> The front of the two German corps was from Fromelles to Warneton (see Sketch 6); that of the British *III. Corps* did not extend quite so far on either flank.

It has recently been divulged in Colonel Hierl's "Der Weltkrieg in Umrisen", a text book for the new German Army, Part II. p. 30, that "the *XIII. Corps* was taken away from Menin and put in west of Lille "in order to break through in the direction of Estaires", whilst the *Fourth Army* attacked simultaneously north and east of Ypres. It was hoped by thus enveloping the British to achieve a great success.

<sup>2</sup> Bois Blancs—Le Quesne—La Houssoie—Rue du Bois.

<sup>3</sup> "S. und G.", p. 52. "Regt. No. 122" (p. 37) reports the capture of Radinghem next day, "the enemy did not offer serious resistance".



and the East Yorkshire eventually threw back their left to form a defensive flank. There was, for a time, hope of recapturing Prêmesques by a counter-attack, and the East Lancashire of the 11th Brigade was sent up by General H. F. M. Wilson from the 4th Divisional reserve to the left of the Leinsters for this purpose; but further action was stopped by the corps commander. Apart from the weight of enemy numbers and metal, the general situation was enough to discourage the idea of the offensive, and it was eventually abandoned. With Ennetières and Prêmesques in the hands of the enemy, there was little hope of a successful counter-attack unless large reinforcements could be employed; and they were not available. Everything counselled the holding of a shorter line. By corps order, therefore, the 6th Division, after dark, occupied the line<sup>1</sup> already partly entrenched in the 16th Brigade area:—Touquet—Bois Blancs—Le Quesne—La Houssoie—Chateau d'Hancardry (1 mile west of Prêmesques)— $\frac{1}{4}$  mile west of Epinette. The division had thus fallen back two miles on the right and centre and a quarter of a mile on the left. This line was subsequently shortened by the 18th Brigade being withdrawn from the salient at the Chateau d'Hancardry. At 5 A.M. on the 21st this brigade was sent to Bois Grenier into reserve. Assured of the support of Conneau's cavalry and the 19th Brigade, now arrived on his right, the G.O.C. considered that he could still hold his own. The losses of the 6th Division on this day amounted to about two thousand, of which 1,119 fell on the 18th Brigade.

In the 4th Division of the III. Corps the day was less eventful, but from 8 A.M. onward the Germans shelled Armentières with heavy guns. In the course of the afternoon, therefore, III. Corps headquarters were moved back to Bailleul. Though the corps orders were to form reserves and strengthen defences, permission was given to General H. F. M. Wilson to continue the attack on Frélinghien in order to improve communication across the Lys. The Seafortths and Irish Fusiliers of the 10th Brigade, therefore, were sent to attack at daybreak; they secured some further trenches and houses on the south border of the village, took fifty prisoners of the *89th Brigade, 40th Division, XIX. Corps*, and counted over a hundred of its dead. Already, however, the supply of lyddite shell for the attack of houses was not equal to the demand, and after the first success the operation was stopped.

<sup>1</sup> See the line for 21st on Map 13 and Sketch 5.

Further to the north, the 12th Brigade, under Colonel Anley, about Le Gheer, in front of Ploegsteert Wood, was attacked from noon onwards with increasing strength, and at dusk enemy infantry made a rush and established themselves within three hundred to five hundred yards of the brigade line.

20 Oct.  
Map 14.  
Sketch 4.

At 4.30 P.M. a message had been received from the III. Corps that the division was to hold its advanced positions if possible, but that the main line was to be held at all costs. Towards 6 P.M. the G.O.C. Cavalry Corps visited 4th Divisional headquarters to relate the proceedings of the day in his command. He expressed his fears for Messines, and asked for assistance on the morrow. This report, coupled with the news of the retirement of the 6th Division—despite a cheerful message from its G.O.C.—did not tend to make the situation appear brighter.

#### THE RETIREMENT OF ALLENBY'S CAVALRY CORPS BEFORE SUPERIOR FORCES

Soon after 8 A.M. it had become clear to General Allenby that the Germans had changed their attitude and were attacking.<sup>1</sup> Their advance first struck the 12th Brigade at Le Gheer on the right of the Cavalry Corps, as just mentioned, and then gradually spread northward. Large numbers of Germans were seen moving forward from Menin and crossing the Lys above the town.

The German advance was well supported by artillery, and though Allenby's horse artillery batteries were assisted by field guns of the 4th Division from the southern flank, the Germans, led by *Jäger* battalions, had by noon crossed the Lys at the permanent bridges at Pont Rouge (just above Deulemont) and Warneton, and by a pontoon bridge at Deulemont, although all of these bridges were under fire. Further forces could be seen advancing from Menin to the attack of Tenbrielen (2 miles north of Comines) and America, where there were regiments of the 2nd Cavalry Division.

The 1st and 5th Cavalry Brigades from reserve were sent up to reinforce, but under the weight of numbers, the two British cavalry divisions gradually withdrew, covered

<sup>1</sup> The attack on Allenby's cavalry corps, some nine thousand strong, on a front of over six miles, was made by six cavalry divisions, with four *Jäger* battalions (see Note at end of Chapter)—over twenty-four thousand strong. Vogel (p. 204) speaks of 24,000 horses having to be watered on the 20th.

by the horse artillery, to the main position selected for such an emergency, leaving outposts in contact with the enemy. At 6 P.M. the 1st Cavalry Division was on the general line St. Yves (north-east corner of Ploegsteert Wood)—Messines, which had previously been entrenched, and faced an attack from Warneton. The 2nd Cavalry Division carried on the line northwards through Garde Dieu along the Wambeke stream to Houthem and Kortewilde (a little north of Houthem on the other side of the canal), where it joined up with the 7th Division. Though the German advance had been small, the situation seemed serious, and throughout the night all available hands were employed in digging trenches.<sup>1</sup> At midnight the G.O.C. 4th Division, in response to General Allenby's request, sent two battalions of the 11th Brigade to Hill 63 at the north-west corner of Ploegsteert Wood, to be near in case the cavalry should require assistance.

#### IV. CORPS : RECONNAISSANCE STOPPED, AND RETIREMENT OF THE LEFT

Map 14.  
Sketch 4.  
(See also  
Sketch  
A.)

The rôle of the IV. Corps had now become that of advanced guard to the I. Corps and other British forces expected near Ypres. In accordance with G.H.Q. Orders, General Rawlinson instructed the 7th Division to hold its line at all costs until nightfall, but to push a strong reconnaissance via Gheluwe towards Menin, without letting it become deeply involved, in order to ascertain what the enemy was about in that quarter. Towards 10.30 A.M. on the 20th October, therefore, as the Germans confined themselves to shelling the division, General Capper sent two battalions of the 20th Brigade (2/Scots Guards and 2/Gordon Highlanders), supported by the divisional mounted troops and a battery, towards Gheluwe, two battalions of the 21st Brigade (2/Royal Scots Fusiliers and 2/Wiltshire) and a battery on their left towards Terhand (1½ miles south-west of Dadizeele), and Commander Samson's armoured cars towards Wervicq. Both columns came under heavy artillery fire as they advanced. The 21st Brigade after passing through Becelaere and approaching Terhand could make no progress; the 20th, though

<sup>1</sup> Vogel (p. 206) states: "The enemy drew back, it is true, but only "to his main position just east of Messines. From there he kept the "ground in front under such an annihilating fire that our riflemen had to "remain lying down 600 metres from the farm [La Potterie, half-way "between Warneton and Messines]."



enfiladed by guns across the Lys at Wervicq, managed to get within half a mile of Gheluwe, which it found occupied by infantry. Shortly after noon, however, German columns from the north-east were seen approaching Zonnebeke, the left flank of the 7th Division line, held by the 22nd Brigade, and divisional orders were at once sent to withdraw the reconnoitring forces to the line of the woods whence they had started. Thus the commanding position on Beelaere spur was abandoned to the enemy without a fight. The retirement was accomplished without much loss, but about 2 P.M., as was anticipated, the 22nd Brigade was heavily attacked. The engagement then spread southwards along the whole front of the 7th Division. The Germans were driven back by fire; but at 4 P.M. they made another attack, which this time included the 2nd Cavalry Division further south. It also was repulsed, but the enemy got within fifty yards of the British trenches at one place, and continued his attempts to advance until well into the night.

The 3rd Cavalry Division, on the left of the 7th Division, had moved out at 6 A.M. and occupied a defensive position from the railway, half a mile south of Passchendaele to Westroosebeke (2 miles north of Passchendaele), where it was in touch with the French cavalry. But the French Territorials supporting the cavalry now retired from Passchendaele. Huge crowds of refugees covered the roads near that village and passed through the British lines, but the enemy did not follow on behind them, and British cavalry was not engaged during the morning. De Mitry's cavalry corps, however, was vigorously attacked by the *XXIII. Reserve Corps* and in the course of the day driven out of all its positions and forced to retire behind Houthulst Forest. It eventually fell back so that at night its outposts were on the line Langemarck—Koekuit and thence west of the forest, three or four miles behind those of the previous day.<sup>1</sup>

This withdrawal exposed the flank of the 3rd Cavalry Division, and about noon it retired to the line Zonnebeke (the left of the 7th Division)—St. Julien—Poelcappelle. The fighting then appeared to be about to die down, but

<sup>1</sup> Boullaire, pp. 67, 68, where the retirement of de Mitry's corps—which it is admitted exposed the left of the British IV. Corps—is attributed to its being unable to count on the assistance of the British 2nd Division, which "definitely halted at Pilekem and began to organize a bridgehead from Pilekem to Bixschoote". There was obviously some misunderstanding. See p. 146.



towards 4 P.M. the division was heavily shelled and attacked on both flanks, and, as its left was in the air, the flank was swung back on to the infantry supports of the French cavalry at Langemark, and the left of the 22nd Brigade conformed. The arrival of the units of the I. Corps on the left then made the 3rd Cavalry Division secure.

The casualties in the IV. Corps on the 20th were reported as only 186.

### I. CORPS : ARRIVAL AT YPRES

On the 20th October the I. Corps began its advance at 6 A.M. The 2nd Division on its right front moved north-eastwards from its billets in and west of Poperinghe on a battle front : the 4th Brigade on the right through Ypres, and the 5th through Elverdinghe, with the 6th Brigade, following the 4th, in reserve. The 1st Division marched from Hazebrouck through Poperinghe towards Elverdinghe across the rear of the 2nd Division, so as to be in a position to support its left flank. The advance of the corps was carried out without incident, except that its columns were delayed by a continuous stream of refugees drifting westwards through Ypres, Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe. Sir Douglas Haig motored forward and visited in succession General Rawlinson, General Bidon, commanding the French troops, and General Byng. He found that arrangements had been made to form a semicircle of trenches round Ypres and, from near Bixschoote, French Territorials continued on the line northwards along the canal towards Dixmude. As the day wore on the left of the 7th Division appeared to be the weakest point ; Sir Douglas Haig, therefore, sent up two battalions of the 4th Brigade to prolong General Capper's left, and take over General Byng's right, the 2/Coldstream going to the north-west side of Zonnebeke, and the 3/Coldstream to St. Julien.

The 2nd Division billeted for the night of the 20th/21st behind the 3rd Cavalry Division in the area between it and Boesinghe. As only groups of French Territorials, scattered in short lengths of trenches, were found covering the north-east of Ypres, the 4th and 5th Brigades spread out their battalions—reduced to six by the detachment of the Coldstream—in outpost formation on the line Wieltje—Pilckem—Steenstraat (on the canal near Bixschoote), ready to support the cavalry if needed. The 1st Division billeted around Elverdinghe—Poperinghe.

Thus as a general result of the day, the right of the III. Corps (Radinghem—La Vallée—Ennetières—Prêmesques) and the left of the IV. Corps, with de Mitry's cavalry, had been driven back, and Allenby's cavalry corps had withdrawn from its outpost to its main position ; but otherwise all attacks had been repulsed, and the British commander was still under the impression that there was only a force of indifferent troops collecting on his front.

20 Oct.  
Map 13.  
Sketches  
5 and 6.

Against the Belgians, also, except for a violent bombardment of the whole front, attacks were only made on the extremities of the line. That against Dixmude was repulsed ; but in front of Nieuport, two advanced posts, in spite of assistance from the sea, were lost, although the enemy was unable to advance beyond them.

On this day General d'Urbal took over command of the French forces in the north, which were now given the name of " Le Détachement d'Armée de Belgique " ; and he established his headquarters at Rousbrugge (7 miles north-west of Poperinghe).

The French 42nd Division (General Grossetti) also arrived and began detraining and concentrating near Nieuport. " The division was intended, in principle, to form a defensive echelon in rear of the left of the Belgian Army and to cover Dunkirk in case of a mishap." <sup>1</sup>

In consequence of the unfavourable weather on the 20th, little could be learnt from the air ; but from contact the presence of the German *XXIII. Reserve Corps* opposite the French cavalry and the *XXII. Reserve* and *III. Reserve Corps* opposite the Belgians was definitely established, whilst prisoners gave information of the presence of the *XXVI. Reserve* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps* opposite the IV. Corps. There was a disposition to regard these improvised and hastily trained formations as of limited value,<sup>2</sup> and no great attention seemed even now to have been paid to the news of them by either French or British Headquarters, and the presence of the *XXVI. Reserve* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps* was doubted.

On the night of the 20th/21st October the situation was :—

<sup>1</sup> d'Urbal, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The French Headquarters Bulletin of the day, quoted in the British Summary, contained the statement :—" the improvised organizations " comprise men of all ages, all trained very summarily, whose value " appears very limited. They should therefore be inferior in quality to " the *Ersatz* divisions."

II. Corps . . . . .	Givenchy—Herlies—Aubers (its furthest position east).
19th Brigade . . . . .	Fromelles (behind the French cavalry).
Conneau's Cavalry Corps . . . . .	Near Le Maisnil, between II. and III. Corps, holding a line of posts.
III. Corps . . . . .	In front of Armentières and Ploegsteert Wood.
Cavalry Corps . . . . .	St. Yves (north-east corner of Ploegsteert Wood)—Messines to the canal, in front of Hollebeke.
7th Division . . . . .	Zandvoorde—Kruiseecke—Zonnebeke.
3rd Cavalry Division . . . . .	Zonnebeke—St. Julien—Langemark.
I. Corps :	
2nd Division . . . . .	Behind the 3rd Cavalry Division ;
1st Division . . . . .	To left rear of 2nd Division at Elverdinghe—Poperinghe.
Lahore Division . . . . .	Detraining at Hazebrouck.
de Mitry's Cavalry Corps . . . . .	Langemark and thence behind Houthulst Forest.
87th and 89th Territorial Divisions . . . . .	Bixschoote and along the canal towards Dixmude.
Belgian Army and French Naval Brigade . . . . .	Along the Yser.
French 42nd Division . . . . .	Behind Nieuport. <sup>1</sup>

## 21ST OCTOBER

## BATTLE IS JOINED ALONG THE WHOLE FRONT

BATTLE OF ARMENTIÈRES—MESSINES—LANGEMARCK<sup>2</sup>

**Map 15.** In pursuance of the plan he had already formed and  
**Sketch 4.** communicated to Sir Douglas Haig on the evening of the 19th, the British Commander-in-Chief ordered for the 21st<sup>3</sup> that the II., III. and Cavalry Corps and the 7th Division should stand fast and entrench, whilst the I. Corps, north of them—with the 3rd Cavalry Division on its right flank and the French cavalry on its left—should advance in the

<sup>1</sup> For the German movements on the 20th October, see end of Chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The portion of this battle fought in front of La Bassée by the II. Corps has been described, see p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 28.



direction of Thourout,<sup>1</sup> to attack the enemy wherever met ; 21 Oct. for it was presumed that the Germans would retreat and there would be little more than rear guard fighting. The I. Corps was eventually to wheel left or right as should seem most advantageous : either to drive towards the sea the enemy cut off in the north, or to turn the northern flank of the German main line.

As regards the Germans, both the *Sixth* and *Fourth Armies* continued their attacks with the purpose of breaking through. The *XXVI. Reserve Corps* seems to have pressed on ahead of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps*, the left of which on the night of 20/21st had only reached the eastern edge of Houthulst Forest, whilst the right of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps* next to it, had got on to Poelcappelle. Otherwise, the German front from Arras to the sea was unbroken and continuous.

### III. CORPS : BATTLE OF ARMENTIÈRES. LOSS AND RECAPTURE OF LE GHEER. LOSS OF LE MAISNIL

From early morning on the 21st the trenches of the III. Corps (Lieut.-General Pulteney), whose business now was to hold on, were continuously shelled, and heavy howitzer fire was directed by the enemy on Frélinghien. In view of the cavalry on the left of the 4th Division (Major-General H. F. M. Wilson) having fallen back on the 20th, Br.-General Hunter-Weston was ordered at 3 A.M. to take two of his battalions of the 11th Brigade, with the Essex (less two companies) of the 12th Brigade, to Hill 63, at the north-west corner of Ploegsteert Wood, to secure the left flank of the III. Corps. As he marched, he was also to drop the East Lancashire (less a company) to support the 12th Brigade, which was holding Le Gheer. This latter part of the order he was able to carry out, but as the 1/Hampshire Regiment had been sent to help the left of the 6th Division and did not rejoin until late in the day, he could only take the 1/Somerset Light Infantry of his own brigade to Hill 63. His fourth battalion, the 1/Rifle Brigade, was still under the 10th Brigade before Frélinghien. This order to the 11th Brigade gives some idea of the break-up of formations and of the manner in which any battalion available was employed to fill a gap, a course rendered necessary by the desperate situation of the III. Corps, holding a twelve-mile front and attacked by two German

<sup>1</sup> See direction marked on right top corner of Map 15 and Sketch 4.



corps. We shall see the same dislocation of brigades later on in front of Ypres.

At 5.15 A.M., under cover of the morning mist, the Germans, continuing their efforts of the previous day, made a strong attack along the whole front of the 12th Brigade near Le Gheer. On the right, it was repulsed by the King's Own and the Lancashire Fusiliers, but on the left the centre of the Inniskilling Fusiliers was broken, and the battalion compelled to retire about a quarter of a mile and take up a fresh position. The enemy now being in Le Gheer, was not only able to enfilade the rest of the 12th Brigade lying to the south—and, indeed, made part of it waver for the moment—but also outflanked and endangered the line of the Cavalry Corps which ran northwards from St. Yves to Messines. After consultation with Major-General de Lisle (1st Cavalry Division) and with Br.-General Hunter-Weston, Colonel Anley, commanding the 12th Brigade, determined to make a counter-attack with the Somerset L.I.—lent to him by General Hunter-Weston for the purpose—and his reserve, which consisted of one company of the Essex Regiment and two companies of the East Lancashire of the 11th Brigade. Organized under cover of Ploegsteert Wood, the counter-attack—made shortly after 9 A.M. and backed up by the 4th Divisional artillery on Hill 63 and two squadrons of 9th Lancers on the left—was entirely successful. The Germans were driven back with great loss, and the abandoned trench was reoccupied except near the cross roads three-quarters of a mile north of Le Touquet (on the Lys opposite Frélinghien). Forty-five men of the Inniskilling Fusiliers were recovered and 134 prisoners were taken. Many attempts were made during the day to recapture the cross roads, but, the ground being in favour of the enemy, it was not until dusk that two companies of the East Lancashire secured the point and the whole of the line was re-established. Sniping prevented the counting of the dead, but wherever the enemy had penetrated the front line, the ground was littered with German corpses. The 12th Brigade lost 468 officers and men, of which the share of the King's Own was 184.

Elsewhere on the 4th Division front the enemy made demonstrations, some even as late as 10 P.M., but nowhere did he actually venture to close and attack.

Shortly after 1 P.M. a message was received by III. Corps headquarters from G.H.Q. asking that assistance might

be sent to the Cavalry Corps on the left, as the line there 21 Oct. was seriously threatened and Messines had to be held at all costs. Enquiries of General Allenby elicited that this help was not immediately necessary; but at 4 P.M., the situation becoming more urgent, two companies of the Essex and a section of the 9th Field Company R.E. were despatched to strengthen Messines, although the front of the III. Corps was already much extended. About the same time a readjustment of the line was made, the 12th Brigade taking over from the Lys at Frélinghien to the Warnave stream south of Ploegsteert Wood, and the 11th from the Warnave to the Douve, thereby relieving the cavalry of the mile of front from St. Yves to the Douve. Thus the 11th Brigade took over the part of Ploegsteert Wood which it was to hold for the whole winter.

The 6th Division was left undisturbed on this day, Map 13.  
Sketch 5. except for shelling, until 6 P.M., when, in the dusk, a somewhat heavy attack was made on its centre, but was repulsed with loss.<sup>1</sup> During the day the machine guns of the 3/Rifle Brigade (17th Brigade) got a good target on Germans detaining on the line which runs past La Vallée into Armentières, and XII. Brigade R.F.A. drove off with considerable loss batteries that came into action near Ennetières church.

Further south, on the flat water meadows around Fromelles, there had been some little difficulty in adjusting the division of ground between General Conneau and Br.-General Gordon (19th Brigade), as their forces had become mixed. The matter was settled by the 19th Brigade taking over the northern part of the gap between the II. and III. Corps from Fromelles to Le Maisnil (both inclusive), with two battalions in front line and two in reserve at Bas Maisnil ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile north-east of Le Maisnil), and the French the southern part from Fromelles to Aubers, where they joined on to the 3rd Division. Towards 11 A.M. the enemy opened a very heavy shell fire on the Le Maisnil section, held by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, followed in the afternoon by an infantry attack.<sup>2</sup> Half of the 1/Middlesex Regiment with its headquarters was sent

<sup>1</sup> It would appear this attack was made, as on the previous day, by the 25th Reserve Division. The history of the 122nd Regiment of the 26th Division (p. 37) states that it was unable to advance [against the right of the 6th Division] "as the hostile fire—particularly artillery—greatly increased in the afternoon".

<sup>2</sup> And, see p. 87, attacked the 3rd Division and French cavalry further south.

up to reinforce, and the fight was maintained until night-fall, when, some French cyclists on the left flank of the defence giving way and leaving a gap, the position became untenable. The six companies then retired some three-quarters of a mile on the reserve at Bas Maisnil. Their losses amounted to just over three hundred, many of whom were wounded and had to be left behind. A group of French horse artillery batteries, firing from near Fromelles against the left flank of the enemy attacking Le Maisnil, rendered most valuable aid to the 19th Brigade.

The concentration of three battalions near Bas Maisnil left the 2/Royal Welch Fusiliers isolated near Fromelles, and a gap of nearly two miles in the line. The situation was restored towards midnight by the 19th Brigade taking up a new line a mile in rear of its morning one, from Rouges Banes to La Boutillerie, where the 1/Middlesex and 1/Cameronians, under protection of covering parties, dug in during the night.<sup>1</sup> The 2/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders went into reserve, and on the following day, the 22nd, the Welch Fusiliers were also drawn back to brigade reserve.<sup>2</sup>

#### CAVALRY CORPS : THE BATTLE OF MESSINES. A DAY ON THE DEFENSIVE

Map 15.  
Sketch 4.

General Allenby's orders for the 21st October to his two divisions were to hold the enemy, but for the 2nd Cavalry Division (General H. Gough), on the left, to re-occupy some of the ground on its front abandoned on the previous evening. It was never possible to carry out this order, for the Germans attacked all along the front in superior force,<sup>3</sup> and so, far from advancing, the left of the 2nd Cavalry Division fell back, though the rest of the position was held.

Early in the morning, the successful attack on Le Gheer by the infantry of the German *XIX. Corps* placed the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, the right of the 1st Cavalry Division

<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Division also fell back, see p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> The Germans did not apparently discover the evacuation of Le Maisnil until next day. "S. und G." (p. 54) awards the "Capture of Le Maisnil" on the 22nd to the *26th Division*, which had drifted southwards after its success at La Vallée. The book "Regt. No. 122" (p. 37 and map) reveals that the attack was made by the *122nd* and *125th Regiments*, but shows them on the night of the 21st well east of the village. It states that the orders to take Le Maisnil that day could not be executed owing to increasing artillery fire.

<sup>3</sup> With five cavalry divisions. The sixth present was engaged against the 7th Division, as will be seen, and two were still in reserve near Lille.



(General de Lisle), in grave danger, for the Germans were now not only able to enfilade the line, but to work round through Ploegsteert Wood to the right rear of the 4th Dragoon Guards, who were on the flank. Reinforced by two squadrons of the 9th Lancers, the regiment clung to its trenches until the counter-attack of the 12th Brigade at 9 A.M. restored this part of the line. 21 Oct.

Elsewhere the 1st Cavalry Division was able to hold its own without loss of ground, and, indeed, with conspicuous success, as it was attacked by three cavalry divisions, the *Guard*, *4th* and *9th*, which never approached to close range.<sup>1</sup> In order that the division might form a reserve, part of its front up to the Douve, as already related, was in the afternoon taken over by the 4th Division.

The 2nd Cavalry Division did not fare so successfully as the 1st. About 9.30 A.M. the German attack began to appear serious; the left of the line on the canal near Kortewilde (a little north of Houthem) was heavily shelled, and, in about two hours, the men of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade there were driven back out of their trenches, and Kortewilde was occupied by the enemy. Withdrawing some twelve hundred yards to and abreast of Hollebeke Chateau, which is some half a mile east of the village of that name, they again made a stand. Unfortunately, about this time a divisional instruction arrived, issued at 10.45 A.M., giving the lines of retreat in case of necessity. This seems to have been misunderstood in the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, for it was taken to be an order for immediate retirement to St. Eloi. Sending word to the 20th Brigade (7th Division), which was on its left, it evacuated Hollebeke Chateau and village, and began to withdraw, communicating its movement to the 4th and 5th Cavalry Brigades on its right. General Gough at once ordered the ground that had been abandoned to be retaken, and the line Messines—Oost-taverne—Hollebeke held. A message also was received from the 7th Division begging that Hollebeke might be retained at least until the 7th Division could take it over. With some help from the 6th Cavalry Brigade, the village was reoccupied and the line restored, with the loss of 4 officers and 11 men; but the Chateau was not recaptured.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The German account of how the cavalry "could no more gain ground than the infantry of the *XIX. Corps*" is given, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> The attack on the 2nd Cavalry Division was made by the *Bavarian Cavalry Division* north of the canal, and the *6th Cavalry Division* south of it (Poseck, p. 193).

It is somewhat difficult to reconcile the German account of this action



At night the British and German cavalries lay opposite each other from the Douve to the Comines Canal, the main lines about a thousand yards apart on the south, and two thousand five hundred yards on the north. By a curious fate, both, instead of being in reserve where their mobility might have been of value, were enmeshed as connecting links in a trench system.

#### IV. CORPS : THE BATTLE OF LANGEMARCK. THE 7TH DIVISION HOLDS ITS OWN

Map 15.  
Sketch 4.

The task of the IV. Corps was to hold on whilst the I. Corps came up on its left. General Rawlinson's orders for the 21st October directed the 7th Division to improve its trenches, and the 3rd Cavalry Division to concentrate on the left of the line and protect the right of the advance of the I. Corps. The front of the 7th Division was a long one, and formed nearly a right angle, roughly running eastwards  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Zandvoorde to Kruiseecke, and then 4 miles northwards to Zonnebeke. There was great difficulty in making good trenches, for, owing to night work and constant retirements, the loss of picks and shovels in the small number of heavy—that is full-sized—tools carried had been very great. An attempt to collect agricultural patterns in Ypres and Poperinghe produced very poor results; and barbed wire, here as elsewhere before R.E. Parks were formed, was almost unobtainable.<sup>1</sup>

The Germans opened the day with heavy artillery fire, mainly with "Black Marias" and "Woolly Bears",<sup>2</sup> from a series of new positions, and followed this up by infantry

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with the British story. The *Bavarian Cavalry Division*, it is stated, took Kortewilde about 10 A.M., but then appears to have been enfiladed "from a strong position 500 yards north of America—Zandvoorde", and at night abandoned Kortewilde and retired to Houthem. Nothing is said about any fighting at Hollebeke Chateau or village—the Bavarians do not claim to have come within two thousand yards of Hollebeke. The *6th Cavalry Division*, south of the canal, only reached a line "Partyntje Farm, west of Houthem—bridge [over a small stream] north of "Gapaard. It succeeded in taking Wambeke"; that is, it was more than a mile from the British line at Oosttaerne—Hollebeke. The explanation seems to be that the German cavalry opposite the 2nd Cavalry Division was inactive, that it never discovered that a withdrawal had taken place, and, therefore, General Gough was able to reoccupy his original line with very little trouble.

The day seems to have been regarded as an unsatisfactory one by the enemy, for the cavalry commander, Lieut.-General von Hollen, was superseded that night by General von der Marwitz.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> 8-inch howitzer shells and high-explosive shrapnel.

actions. As they never managed to spot the British **21 Oct.** batteries, the latter were able to render conspicuous service, and were firing on infantry columns from morning to eve. Thus the enemy made no progress, though the position of the IV. Corps was for some time very critical, owing to the British 2nd Cavalry Division on its right giving ground and to the heavy attack made against its left.

From Passchendaele, on the summit of the Ypres ridge, lost the previous day, the trenches of the 22nd Brigade (General Lawford) near Zonnebeke were badly enfiladed from an early hour by artillery and machine-gun fire. By 8 A.M. the extreme left of the division was seriously threatened by infantry of the *52nd Reserve Division*, and General Rawlinson, at 11.30 A.M., moved up the 7th Cavalry Brigade (Br.-General Kavanagh) to support it. Then followed a very determined attack by the *54th Reserve Division* and *3rd Cavalry Division* against the 21st Brigade (centre) and 20th Brigade. It was particularly pressed against the 2/Green Howards and the 2/R. Scots Fusiliers of the 21st Brigade in the centre near Poezelhoek (between Gheluvelt and Becelaere). The Germans came on in wave after wave, and, despite the heaviest losses, managed for a moment to break in between the two battalions. Behind the junction, however, the enclosure of Polderhoek Chateau was held by a company of the Fusiliers, and further progress was stayed, and the attack, except for artillery fire, came for a time to an end. At the same hour as the above attack, the *Bavarian Cavalry Division*, pushing up to the north bank of the canal, caused the left of the 2nd Cavalry Division to fall back from Hollebeke, as we have seen. Thus a gap of a mile was left in the front, within four miles of Ypres, between Hollebeke and Zandvoorde, which, if taken advantage of by the enemy, might have compromised the whole line. General Capper sent all the troops he could spare to support his right flank: two companies of the 2/Scots Guards, his divisional cavalry (Northumberland Hussars) and the Divisional Cyclist Company. But fortunately the advance of the I. Corps was now beginning to ease the situation on his left; so at 1.30 P.M. Sir H. Rawlinson felt he was able to send the 6th Cavalry Brigade across to Hollebeke. Later, at 3 P.M., he moved the 7th Cavalry Brigade from the left, first to Voormezele (behind St. Eloi) and then to Hooge, to act as a reserve in case of any attempt of the enemy to penetrate into the gap near Hollebeke; but no move whatever was made to do so.

Finding, however, that the withdrawal of the 7th Cavalry Brigade had left a gap between the left of the 7th Division (the 2/Queen's) and the right of the I. Corps (the 2/Coldstream), the Germans (*52nd Reserve Division*) renewed their attacks at this point and, supported again by violent enfilade artillery fire from Passchendaele, got up to within two hundred yards of the 22nd Brigade. Br.-General Lord Cavan, 4th (Guards) Brigade, sent first a company and then the rest of the Irish Guards to fill this gap, and by 6.30 P.M. the battalion had its right on Zonnebeke station (north-west of the village), and the danger was for the moment at an end. The left of the 22nd Brigade was still, however, in an exposed salient and badly enfiladed by artillery fire from the ridge north-westward of Zonnebeke. The 1/Welch Fusiliers, occupying the right portion of it, had suffered heavily, losing 10 officers and 250 other ranks;<sup>1</sup> the 2/Queen's on their left, 7 officers and 171 other ranks; and the 2/R. Warwickshire nearly as many. Their trenches, dug in the very sandy soil, were practically battered in, the houses in Zonnebeke were on fire, and the enemy infantry in places within a hundred yards. General Lawford, commanding the brigade, was therefore given permission about 5.30 P.M. to withdraw his left from the salient and join on direct with the I. Corps, through Zonnebeke, at the level crossing (9th Kilometre) close to Zonnebeke Station. Thence the brigade front ran south-eastwards past the front of Polygon Wood and connected with the 21st Brigade at Reutel. This withdrawal was accomplished at midnight, without interruption, although all three battalions in the front line were in close contact with the enemy.

As darkness fell, however, the Germans seemed about to make a night attack against the centre of the 7th Division, for infantry wearing white bands on their arms appeared in the open near Becelacre. They were engaged, over open sights, by a section of the 25th Battery (XXXV. Brigade R.F.A.), brought to within two hundred yards of the infantry front line. The guns were run up to the crest and were just in time to catch the Germans on the sky-line shoulder to shoulder at 1,200 yards' range. There was much shouting, but nothing more was seen until next morning, when many bodies were visible on the forward slope.

<sup>1</sup> The battalion, which had most of the casualties in the abortive advance on Menin, was reduced to 6 officers and 206 men; all battalions were much below strength by this time.



Late in the evening the 3rd Cavalry Division took over **21 Oct.** the right of the 7th Division line near Zandvoorde, making it possible, for the first time, to withdraw a battalion (2/Scots Guards) into divisional reserve.

Thus, except for the slight retirement near Zonnebeke, the line of the IV. Corps was generally maintained during the 21st, though it had no reserves, and General Rawlinson had to employ his cavalry division first to safeguard his left and then his right.

### I. CORPS : THE BATTLE OF LANGEMARCK. A SHORT SUCCESSFUL ADVANCE

On the night of the 20th/21st, the I. Corps had been **Map 15.** halted with the 2nd Division north-east of Ypres on the **Sketches** line Frezenberg—Wieltje—Pilekem, and the 1st Division **4 and A.** west of Ypres, with its head at Elverdinghe. G.H.Q. orders instructed it to march north-eastwards on the 21st in the direction of Thourout, with the object of capturing Bruges, and to attack the enemy wherever met. The only information regarding the Germans given to Sir Douglas Haig was still to the effect that one corps and no more was within striking distance, for the Commander-in-Chief apparently either placed no reliance on the details of the strength of the enemy gathered by his Intelligence, or else he considered the new German Reserve corps of small account. Reports collected by the IV. Corps indicated that there had been two further Reserve corps near Herzele (near Sottegem, 20 miles west of Brussels),<sup>1</sup> and there was a general impression both at I. and IV. Corps headquarters that the enemy would be met with in considerable force, though, as to the quality of his troops, it seemed certain that they were newly raised. Full measures for flank protection of the I. Corps were arranged : on the right by the 3rd Cavalry Division. On the left, French Territorial troops supporting the cavalry were entrenched in Langemarek,<sup>2</sup> and held the passages over the Yser Canal, whilst four French cavalry divisions watched the western exits of Houthulst Forest. A staff officer of General de Mitry visited Sir Douglas Haig in the evening of the 20th, and was made fully acquainted with the British plan.

<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, very belated news.

<sup>2</sup> Langemarek was the largest of the villages near Ypres. It had 1,450 houses and 7,438 inhabitants.



The operation orders of the I. Corps, issued at 10 P.M. on the 20th, arranged for an advance in two stages: first, up to the line Passchendaele—Poelcappelle and then to a line about a mile and a half northwards, through West-roosebeke.<sup>1</sup> As the 2nd Division, by its distribution of the previous day, was already disposed for battle, and considerably nearer the front than the 1st Division, it was directed not to cross the Zonnebeke—Langemark road until the 1st Division reached Langemark at 7 A.M., when both divisions were to move forward to the attack.

Owing to congestion on the roads and the bridges of the Yser, caused by French Territorial troops and refugees, the 1st Division was late in reaching the starting line. Its advanced guard did not arrive at Langemark until 8.30 A.M., and the general advance of the I. Corps did not take place until fifty minutes later.

The 2nd Division was assembled at 6.30 A.M. ready to move north-eastwards with the leading troops on the Zonnebeke—Langemark road, and General Monro moved up his headquarters to St. Julien. The 4th (Guards) Brigade,<sup>2</sup> on the right, was concealed behind the windmill hill just north-west of Zonnebeke, and the 5th Brigade on the left in the Steenbeek depression a mile north of St. Julien;<sup>3</sup> each infantry brigade had a brigade R.F.A., a field company R.E., and a troop of divisional cavalry attached. The 6th Brigade, with the remainder of the divisional artillery, was held in reserve near Wieltje. When the 3rd Brigade came up on the left of the 5th, at 9.20 A.M., the advance began. At first steady progress was made, although directly the Zonnebeke—Langemark road was crossed the enemy's fire became heavy. Fortunately it was not accurate except on the left near St. Julien, where oblique machine-gun and rifle fire caused the greater part of the 75 casualties of the 2/Worcestershire, the 220 of the 2/Oxfordshire L.I. and the 113 of the 2/Highland Light Infantry suffered on this day. The Germans were greatly assisted by the nature of the country, which, though nearly flat—such low ridges as there were did not show up—was enclosed and intersected by streams, and high thick hedges,

<sup>1</sup> Appendices 29, 30 and 31.

The 1st Division was directed to leave the 2nd Brigade and the XXV. Brigade R.F.A., etc., as corps reserve, south of Pilekem.

<sup>2</sup> The 2/ and 3/Coldstream rejoined the brigade from their advanced position with the 3rd Cavalry Division, and were in front.

<sup>3</sup> For the topography see Sketch A.

very difficult to get through; whilst view was further **21 Oct.** obstructed by labourers' cottages, trees in the hedgerows, and small copses. By 2 P.M. the general line of the division had advanced a thousand to two thousand yards from the Zonnebeke—Langemarek road, and was within two hundred to five hundred yards of the main line of German resistance. Two companies of the 3/Coldstream actually reached the top of the low ridge between the Hancbeek and Stroombeek, on which the hamlet of Gravenstafel is situated, and the 9th Battery came into action 1,200 yards from the enemy, where it fired 1,400 rounds during the day. The artillery of the I. Corps, indeed, had magnificent targets all day, and one battery, the 46th, the target of a lifetime—thick waves of advancing infantry in the open at short range. The troops of General Capper and General Lomax on the flanks of the 2nd Division could, however, give no assistance—and were, indeed, calling on General Monro for help, the Irish Guards being sent by him, as already related, to fill the gap on the left of the 22nd Brigade near Zonnebeke. Against the ever-increasing volume of fire the 2nd Division could make no further progress, and, after two staff officers had been up to the front to make a personal inspection of the situation, it was decided to stand fast on a general line from a point just north-west of Zonnebeke to another on the St. Julien—Poelcappelle road,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the former of these two villages. This line was entrenched as soon as it grew dusk, and the two companies of the 3/Coldstream which had pressed on in advance, were eventually withdrawn, the total losses of the battalion being just over one hundred men. The opponents of the 2nd Division appear to have been the *52nd Reserve Division*,<sup>1</sup> supported by heavy artillery, for 8-inch howitzers were noticed in action; but, though several counter-attacks were made during the night, no serious attempt was made to dislodge the British.

When the 1st Division (General Lomax) moved forward,<sup>2</sup> Langemarek, whence the attack was to be launched, was found still to be in possession of a French Territorial battalion; and on arrival there, General Landon was in-

<sup>1</sup> The boundary between the *52nd* and *53rd Reserve Division* is not known.

<sup>2</sup> Advanced guard: 1/Queen's, 1/South Wales Borderers and 1/Gloucestershire of the 3rd Brigade (Br.-General H. J. S. Landon), two batteries, a troop of cavalry, a platoon of cyclists, a section of a Field Company R.E., and a bearer division of a Field Ambulance.

formed that French cavalry was holding Houthulst Forest, and that the forest was clear of the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

At 8.30 A.M. the Germans<sup>2</sup> were reported to be advancing from Poelcappelle station, which lies about two thousand yards northward of the village, and General Landon directed the 1/South Wales Borderers and 1/Queen's to attack against the village and station respectively. The enemy did not show any strong force of infantry during the first stages of the fight, but appeared to be well supported by artillery. There was difficulty in finding observing stations for the British guns, owing to the flat and enclosed nature of the country, but, assisted by the co-operation of three French batteries near Langemark, the two battalions of the 1st Division advanced guard made steady progress; but they never got up abreast of the 5th Brigade, though a connecting company of the South Wales Borderers established touch with it about 11 A.M. The Germans fell back before the Borderers and the Queen's to their entrenched line of the previous night, which extended from Poelcappelle village to Poelcappelle station; but before advantage could be taken of this, the advanced guard had another enemy on its hands. At 10 A.M. a force appeared beyond Koekuit, a farm some half a mile away on the left flank of the 1st Division, and the third battalion of the advanced guard, the 1/Gloucestershire, was sent in that direction. It occupied Koekuit with half a company, with the main body of the battalion entrenched in rear. Two companies of the 2/Welch, from the main body, took the place of the Gloucestershire as General Landon's reserve; but they were soon used in support of the Gloucestershire and South Wales Borderers. Thus shortly before noon the whole of the advanced guard of the 1st Division was deployed covering, with many gaps, the front Poelcappelle—a point about a thousand yards east of Langemark—Koekuit. It was not to progress any further. By this time, the advance of the German *46th Reserve Division* through Houthulst Forest began seriously to affect the French cavalry on the left of the I. Corps, whilst, north of the forest in the French sector south of Dixmude, the *45th Reserve Division* was pushing on towards the canal. The advance of the I. Corps was twenty-four hours too late.

<sup>1</sup> This was no doubt true as regards the enemy, for "Ypres", p. 33, states that the *46th Reserve Division* on the night of the 20th had only reached the eastern edge of the forest.

<sup>2</sup> *51st Reserve Division* reached a line Poelcappelle village to the railway station on the evening of the 20th. "Ypres", p. 40.



About 11.30 A.M. it was noticed, from the fall of the enemy's shell, that bodies of French cavalry were retiring south-eastwards towards Bixschoote; and, shortly after, cyclists of the French 7th Cavalry Division, who were on the left of the Gloucestershire, reported that German infantry was advancing half a mile south-west of Koekuit. Having given the information the cyclists retired, and nothing further was seen of them. At 11.45 A.M. another German attack against Koekuit farm and the flank of the 1st Division developed, and was again repulsed; but then the Gloucestershire withdrew their advanced post from the farm buildings, in consequence of a retirement, owing to a misunderstanding, of the Queen's on their right. Part of the 1/Coldstream of the 1st (Guards) Brigade now arrived; it had been sent up from the main body of the 1st Division with orders to reinforce the Gloucestershire and prolong the line along the Kortebeek stream, which flows westwards a quarter of a mile or so south of Koekuit. With the co-operation of two of its companies, the farm was retaken about an hour later, but was evacuated again at night, as being too much in advance of the general line.

About noon the G.O.C. of the 1st Division moved the Cameron Highlanders of the 1st (Guards) Brigade (Br.-General C. FitzClarence) with some guns to the Kortekeer Cabaret—at the cross roads on the Langemarck—Bixschoote road about a thousand yards short of the latter village—as a precaution against a hostile advance from the Houthulst Forest. The situation of the I. Corps seemed promising—it had  $2\frac{1}{2}$  brigades still in hand, and the enemy was reported by the 2nd Division and by the 1st Division advanced guard to be retiring—when, about 2 P.M., the French cavalry corps received orders to withdraw west of the canal. The reason for the movement stated at the time was that the enemy was advancing in strength of about a division from the direction of Houthulst.<sup>1</sup> The G.O.C. of the French 7th Cavalry Division, on the immediate left of the I. Corps, realizing what would be the effect of his withdrawal, remained, however, for some time near Bixschoote, and declined to obey the order until it was repeated; and, in spite of the order, many isolated bodies of French remained in action until dark.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General d'Urbal in the "Revue Militaire Générale" 1921, p. 5, states, "it was indispensable to remain in possession of the line of the Yser and its crossings".

<sup>2</sup> Boullaire, p. 71, states that the French 4th Cavalry Division "crossed the Yperlee [Ypres—Yser Canal] at Steenstraat and Drie Grachten [3



Almost at the same moment as the news of the withdrawal of the French cavalry arrived, General Rawlinson (IV. Corps) informed General Haig personally of the hostile attack up both sides of the Comines Canal towards Ypres, the retirement of the 2nd Cavalry Division from Hollebeke, and the forcing back of the 22nd Brigade near Zonnebeke, and stated that the only reserve in the IV. Corps was a cavalry brigade in Zonnebeke. There appeared to be a definite enemy movement to close in on Ypres from north-east and south-east. In view of the withdrawal of the French cavalry on the left and the report from the French that "the enemy was advancing in the strength of about "a division from the direction of Clercken, 3 miles north "of Houthulst Forest", combined with the precarious position of Capper's 7th Division on his right, the G.O.C. I. Corps ordered that the attack should not be pressed beyond the first stage: Passchendaele—Poelcappelle. Of this course Sir John French, who came in the afternoon to General Haig's headquarters, approved. Whilst he was still there, General de Mitry also arrived, and the British Commander-in-Chief impressed on him the vital importance of continuing to protect the left flank of the I. Corps, and pointed out to him the danger in which it had been placed by the unexpected retirement of the French cavalry.

Meantime the situation of the 1st Division had become serious. French Territorials reported that the *46th Reserve Division* was advancing from Houthulst Forest against the open flank of the division between Langemarck and the canal. The Cameron Highlanders, the flank guard at the Kortekeer Cabaret, supported by the 46th Battery, successfully checked the advance of "about a brigade" which developed against the gap between the left of the 1/Coldstream near Koekuit, and their own right. To meet an attack of a new division on the extreme left of the B.E.F. there were only available the 2nd Brigade<sup>1</sup> and the XXV. Brigade R.F.A. in corps reserve on the northern

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miles north of Steenstraat] at noon". The times of the retirement of the others are not given, but it is stated that when the 4th went back, the 5th retired on Bixschoote; the 6th "relieved by the British near St. Julien", and not engaged, reached Zuydschoote (2 miles south-west of Bixschoote and also west of the canal) at 4 p.m. Of the 7th Cavalry Division it is only said that three of its regiments supported the 5th and retired with it across the St. Jansbeek, a stream which covers Bixschoote; of the rest, part was driven out of the Kortekeer Cabaret, and at night was 500 yards west of it, that is close to Bixschoote.

<sup>1</sup> It had one company of the Royal Sussex west of the canal, near the bridge at Steenstraat, acting as escort to two 6-inch siege howitzer batteries.

outskirts of Ypres, and the 2½ battalions of the 1st (Guards) Brigade—all that was left of the main body of the 1st Division—near Pilekem. 21 Oct.

The threat against the left flank was felt to be so serious that these last mentioned battalions were employed to reinforce on the left of the Cameron Highlanders, so that—two companies of the 1/Coldstream being already on their right—the whole of the 1st (Guards) Brigade was now engaged in holding a very extended line, three miles long, from the left of the 3rd at Koekuit to Bixschoote, with French cuirassiers and Territorials filling the space westwards from that village to the canal. On this line the brigade commenced to entrench, practically without interference. The front of the I. Corps had thus become a pronounced salient, running some five miles north-north-west from near Zonnebeke to Koekuit, and then two and a half miles westwards, and instead of being able to push ahead and outflank the Germans, General Haig had been compelled to use the main body of the 1st Division to cover his flank.

Orders were now sent to stop further movement of the 3rd Brigade, the original advanced guard; but, as has been seen, it was already checked by difficulties of its own, and further about 2.30 P.M. the two leading companies of the South Wales Borderers, its right battalion, were heavily counter-attacked on a broad front and were forced by heavy losses to give a little ground. Their withdrawal uncovered the right of the 1/Queen's, which endeavoured to meet the difficulty by throwing back a flank, but was eventually compelled to conform to the retirement at considerable cost. Both battalions rallied a short distance back, and there dug in and held on anew, the South Wales Borderers still keeping connection by means of a detached company with the 5th Brigade on its right.

Shortly afterwards, orders issued by General Haig at 3 P.M. to stop all further advance, halt and entrench where the troops stood, reached the 1st and 2nd Divisions. At night, therefore, the general line of the I. Corps—formed by large groups and not a continuous one—was still a salient, with Koekuit as the apex:—

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 2nd Division . . . | From Zonnebeke Station N.N.W. to a point about seventeen hundred yards east of Langemarek. |
| 1st Division . . . | Continued the line to Koekuit, where it turned westwards to the canal at Steenstraat.      |

The 2nd Division kept a brigade in reserve at St. Jean, and the 2nd Brigade, in corps reserve, was divided between Pilckem and Boesinghe.

The casualties of the I. Corps on the 21st October amounted to 932. In spite of the numerical superiority, 5 divisions against 2, and the exposed left flank of the I. Corps, the Germans had done little more than bring the British advance to a halt, and that at exceedingly heavy cost.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF ARTILLERY

As it will be impossible to describe in detail the action of the artillery of the I. Corps, the general outline of its employment must be borne in mind.

The divisional artillery, like that of the other corps, was at first divided and attached to the infantry brigades, but as the battle progressed, it was gradually reconcentrated and told off with the corps heavy batteries<sup>1</sup> to particular sectors of the front for the support of the infantry in those sectors. The heavy guns as well as the field guns were pushed well forward.<sup>2</sup> Telephone connection was installed between the divisional artillery commanders, and between them and their brigade commanders, so that by mutual arrangement fire could be concentrated rapidly on any part of the front within range, and as squared maps became available this crossfire grew very accurate. The corps artillery commander in 1914 could do little more than organize; he could not control, for,

<sup>1</sup> The total number of heavy guns with the B.E.F. was 93, of which 54 were employed in the battles of Ypres, viz. :

	<i>Total.</i>	<i>At Ypres.</i>
60-pdrs. (4 per six divisions)	24	20
4·7-inch guns (24 with 7th, 8th and Indian Divisions, 16 with I. and II. Corps)	40	16
6-inch howitzers (old siege guns)	24	16
6-inch guns	4	1
9·2-inch howitzer ("Mother", landed 19th Oct.)	1	1
	—	—
	93	54

The 4·7-inch Q.F. gun (on travelling carriage), firing a 45-lb. shell, was after the South African war and until the introduction of the 60-pdr. in its place, the heavy gun of the Expeditionary divisions. Its shooting was irregular and its shells were unreliable. These characteristics earned for it the name of "strict neutrality", for its shells fell on friend and foe alike. The amount of ammunition available was small, and the daily expenditure in 1914 was limited to 8 rounds per gun per day, so the 4·7 did not count for much.

<sup>2</sup> The distribution of the artillery is shown on Maps 26 and 27 and Sketch 16.



like his confrère the chief engineer of the corps, his staff <sup>21 Oct.</sup> consisted of a single clerk, and he had no apparatus, and only half a share in a motor car. Nevertheless, the seeds of co-operation and mutual support were sown. At this period, owing to the unfavourable weather and the breakdown of the one and only wireless equipment, the aviators were not able to render much assistance to the artillery, and no captive balloons had reached the Army. Firing was therefore carried on mainly by means of forward observers, and maps and compasses. Owing to trees and hedges, direct observation was practically impossible, except by single guns or sections of guns sent up into the infantry line for special purposes.

The corps and divisional batteries were employed mostly to fire on the enemy's infantry. The counter-battery work, that is the engagement of the enemy's guns, was carried out almost entirely by a 6-inch gun and two 4·7-inch on one of the armoured trains under the command of Lieut.-Commander Littlejohns.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the abundance of naval ammunition, the train was able to do the work of many batteries, and, though occasionally hit, was never put out of action, nor cut off by the destruction of the line.

As the battle progressed the lack of ammunition for the artillery became very pronounced,<sup>2</sup> and, as will be seen in the course of the narrative, towards the end of October a limit had to be placed on expenditure, a quarter of the divisional guns being withdrawn as they had nothing to fire. The batteries that remained in action, though constantly "plastered" by the enemy, were eventually unable to reply, except at the rate of a shell per half-hour. Nevertheless, the very moderate demands—judging by later standards—of the artillery for more ammunition were esteemed by some at home to be ridiculous, and one artillery general was informed by a high authority that no army or nation could maintain supply at the rate asked for. Yet by good management of the small supply available, accurate shooting, and mutual support between the divisions, the Royal Artillery were invariably in a position to assist effectively their hard-pressed comrades of the infantry, and many an incipient German attack was stopped by the guns alone.

<sup>1</sup> The first train of six 4·7-inch guns, which had been at Antwerp, was used mainly with the Belgians. A third subsequently organized was used as a relief train.

<sup>2</sup> See Introductory Chapter for statistics of supply.



FRENCH AND BELGIANS ON THE LEFT OF THE  
BRITISH

**Sketch 6.** The retirement of the French cavalry corps to the Yser before the advance of the German *XXIII. Reserve Corps* has already been referred to. At night, with the 87th Territorial Division and half of the 89th,<sup>1</sup> it held the line of the canal from Steenstraat (near Bixsechoote), the left of the British, to St. Jacques Cappelle (about 1½ miles south of Dixmude), which had been fixed as the boundary with the Belgian Army.<sup>2</sup>

During the night of the 20th/21st and all day on the 21st, the whole of the Belgian front was subjected to an extremely violent bombardment, as were also the rearward areas, presumably with the intention of hindering the bringing up of reserves ; but there was little infantry fighting except at Dixmude. There, desperate attempts to break in, pushed up to close range, were made in vain on the south by the German *43rd Reserve Division* and on the north by the *44th Reserve Division*.

THE GENERAL SITUATION ON NIGHT OF 21ST/22ND  
OCTOBER

**Sketch 4 for north**  
**Sketch 5 for south**  
**of**  
**Armen-**  
**tières.**

The general situation on the night of the 21st/22nd may thus be summarized. The 7th Division and I. Corps were disposed on three sides of an oblong on the eastern side of Ypres, the French and Belgians extending the line on the left along the Yser to the sea ; on the right Allenby's cavalry corps, the III. Corps, Conneau's cavalry corps and the II. Corps carried the line down to a point west of La Bassée, where the French Tenth Army took it up. There had been heavy fighting during the 21st along the whole of the British front without any definite result, except a retirement of the 3rd Division, due in some degree to a loss of ground at Le Maisnil by the 19th Brigade, a retirement in error by the 2nd Cavalry Division, and a retirement in consequence of pressure, from Zonnebeke, by the 22nd Brigade ; but the expected advance of the I. Corps to turn the German line had proved impossible of execution. The day had been cloudy, and such air reconnaissances as could be made between 2.30 and 4 P.M.

<sup>1</sup> The rest was at Dunkirk.

<sup>2</sup> " Military Operations of Belgium ", p. 77.

furnished no clue as to the German movements ; but the presence of the 4 new German Reserve corps was definitely established by the weight of the enemy's attack and by prisoners' statements, and it was confirmed by intercepted wireless. There were now known for certain to be  $5\frac{1}{2}$  enemy corps, if not more, north of the Lys, without counting the 4 cavalry corps. At night the Operations Section of G.H.Q. summarized the situation as under.<sup>1</sup>

Formation.	Front in Miles (Approx.).	Attacked by	Information received since Peace.
II. Corps . . . . .	6	<i>VII. Corps</i>	<i>VII. Corps</i>
Conneau's Cavalry Corps	1	<i>XIX. Corps</i>	<i>XIII. Corps</i>
III. Corps (plus 19th Brigade)	12	Part of <i>VII. Corps</i>	<i>XIX. Corps</i>
Cavalry Corps . . . . .	4	Part of <i>XIX.</i> and brigade of <i>XVIII. Corps</i> [The <i>25th Res. Division</i> attached to <i>XIII. Corps</i> belonged to <i>XVIII.</i> ]	<i>I. IV. and V. Cavalry Corps</i> (less a division), with <i>II.</i> in reserve
IV. Corps . . . . .	6	1 division of <i>XIII. XXVII. Res. Corps</i>	<i>3rd Cavalry Division</i> <i>XXVII. Res. Corps</i>
I. Corps . . . . .	7	<i>XXVI. Res. Corps</i> Part of <i>XXIII.</i>	<i>XXVI. Res. Corps</i> and <i>46th Res. Division</i> of <i>XXIII.</i>
French and Belgian Armies	20	Part of <i>XXIII. XXII. Res. Corps.</i>  <i>III. Res. Corps Ersatz Division</i>	<i>45th Res. Division</i> of <i>XXIII. Res. Corps</i> <i>XXII. Res. Corps</i> <i>III. Res. Corps</i> <i>4th Ersatz Division</i>

Thus, seven and a third British divisions and five Allied cavalry divisions, reduced by fighting, were holding a front of some thirty-five to thirty-six miles against eleven

<sup>1</sup> The right-hand column gives the German forces as disclosed since the war in "Ypres", Poseek, etc. It will be observed that, except as regards the cavalry and one brigade of the *XVIII. Corps*, the estimate was very close to the truth, though the *XIII. Corps* was placed where it had been on the night of the 18th/19th, after which it moved south of the *XIX.*

German divisions, eight of which were fresh, and eight cavalry divisions. The Allied line was obviously too thin. There was every indication, too, that, besides being in considerably greater strength than had originally been anticipated, the Germans were engaged in a determined offensive. The nature of the fighting had been very severe, and, in spite of exceedingly heavy losses, every effort had been made by the new German corps to press their attack home. Although there was, in many cases, lack of skilful leading and the troops were "bunched", on one portion of the line of the I. Corps it was reported that a German battalion had made the best attack which our men had yet seen during the campaign.<sup>1</sup>

General Joffre visited Sir John French during the day and informed him that he was at once despatching the French IX. Corps to Ypres. The Lahore Division, the leading formation of the Indian Corps, was within reach, concentrating west of Hazebrouck, so the British Commander-in-Chief decided to hold on until these reinforcements arrived.

The following order to all corps was issued from G.H.Q. at 8.30 P.M.

"Action against enemy will be continued to-morrow on general line now held, which will be strongly entrenched."

But for such entrenchment, as we know, both material and man power were lacking.

#### NOTE

##### GERMAN MOVEMENTS ON THE 19TH OCTOBER

**Sketch 6.** The German account of the 19th October is that "more or less heavy fighting developed on the whole front of the *Fourth Army*". The *XXII. Reserve Corps* fought its way up in line with the *III. Reserve* with its left directed on Dixmude, and the other corps advanced westward. In the *XXIII. Reserve*, which engaged the French cavalry, the *45th Reserve Division* reached Handzaeme (6 miles east of Dixmude) and the *46th*, Staden. Further south the *51st Reserve Division* of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps* captured Roulers from the French, and the *52nd* drove back the British 3rd Cavalry Division; the *53rd Reserve Division* of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* was in action against the British 3rd Cavalry Division and 7th

<sup>1</sup> The historian of the *Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 247* of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* says in his preface. "The best Active regiments that tried later did not achieve more than the young Reserve regiments; that alone suffices to award the latter the highest praise imaginable."



Division. Altogether an advance of six to nine miles was made by the *Fourth Army*.

In the *Sixth Army*, the *XIII. Corps* was taken into reserve from its position on the line Warneton—Menin, and replaced by four cavalry divisions of the *IV. Cavalry Corps*.<sup>1</sup> This, of course, did not become known to the British for several days, as the fighting in this area was at long range.

#### GERMAN MOVEMENTS ON THE 20TH OCTOBER

The 20th October is regarded by the Germans as the first day of serious fighting in the Ypres area : both the *Fourth* and *Sixth Armies* attacked. It was hoped by a simultaneous offensive north and south of Ypres<sup>2</sup> to envelop the British there and achieve a great success. The accounts of the operations are rather meagre, except of those of the *XIII. Corps* and of the cavalry which filled the gap between the two Armies. As regards the *Fourth Army*, opposite Ypres, it is stated : "The British and French had to bring up constant reinforcements, and a hard and bitter struggle began for every yard of ground".<sup>3</sup>

In the *Sixth Army* the *XIV.*, *VII.*, *XIII.* and *XIX. Corps* were ordered to make a general attack. According to one account, the *XIX. Corps* and the *XIII. Corps*, south of it, did not make much progress.<sup>4</sup> According to another, "although fresh reinforcements had been sent up to that part of the front [Arras (17 miles south of La Bassée)—La Bassée—Armentières] by the German General Staff, a break-through had not been possible",<sup>5</sup> a definite confession of failure against the *II. Corps*. The weakness of the British front, where the greater part of the *XIII. Corps* spent the day in attacking two battalions, the Buffs and the Sherwood Foresters, seems to have entirely escaped notice.<sup>6</sup>

For the 20th, and until the 22nd October, the six German cavalry divisions which attacked the two British cavalry divisions were organized into three corps :

<i>I. Cavalry Corps</i> (Richthofen)	<i>Guard</i> and <i>4th Cavalry Divisions</i>
<i>IV. Cavalry Corps</i> (Hollen)	<i>6th</i> and <i>9th Cavalry Divisions</i>
<i>V. Cavalry Corps</i> (Stetten)	<i>3rd</i> and <i>Bavarian Cavalry Divisions</i>

under the command of Lieut.-General von Hollen, whose corps for the time being was taken over by General von Schmettow.<sup>7</sup> Only four *Jäger* battalions are mentioned as being present. The instructions to the cavalry were "to hold the enemy fast and, whilst he was engaged in front by the Saxons (*XIX. Corps*), to attack him in flank and rear with as strong a force as possible".<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 25. The relief, already mentioned, took place during the 18th and 19th. The *IV. Cavalry Corps* then consisted of the *3rd*, *6th* and *Bavarian Cavalry Divisions* with the *9th* attached. The *II. Cavalry Corps* (*2nd* and *7th Cavalry Divisions*) was in reserve south of Lille. The *I. Cavalry Corps* (*Guard* and *4th Cavalry Divisions*) moved from Lille on the 19th to support the *IV. Cavalry Corps* (Poseck, p. 191).

<sup>2</sup> See footnote, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Poseck, pp. 191-2.

<sup>5</sup> "Ypres", p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 140-1.

<sup>7</sup> Poseck, p. 191. The *II. Cavalry Corps* (Marwitz, *2nd* and *7th Cavalry Divisions*) was in Army reserve south of Lille until the 22nd.

<sup>8</sup> Vogel, p. 205.



*V. Cavalry Corps*, which was across the Lys at Menin, was ordered to advance on Ypres on both sides of the Gheluvelt main road. At evening its line was from Koelberg (half-way between Menin and Gheluvelt) to near Comines.

The *IV. Cavalry Corps* crossed at Warneton heading for Messines. It "succeeded in advancing about a kilometre from Warneton. "There the attack was held up by ever-increasing artillery fire, "partly enfilade."

The *I. Cavalry Corps* crossed the Lys above Warneton to connect the *IV. Cavalry Corps* with the *XIX. Corps*. Its attack also only advanced about a thousand yards, and then came to an end, abreast of the *IV. Cavalry Corps* line. The resistance offered by the heavily outnumbered British cavalry seems, therefore, to have been thoroughly effective.

The situation of the German forces on the night of the 20th/21st October is shown on Sketch 6.

#### GERMAN MOVEMENTS ON THE 21ST OCTOBER

Map 15. The German official account ("Ypres", p. 4) in relating the action  
Sketch 4. of the *XXVI. Reserve* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, which came up opposite the 7th Division, 3rd Cavalry Division and the head of the 2nd Division, slurs over the 21st October, and passes abruptly from the 20th to the 22nd October. But in the narrative of the operations of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps* (p. 35) it is stated that the attack of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps* was completely held up in front of Langemarck on the 21st, and this admission is extended (p. 39) to include the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*. Both corps, it is said, "were "by this time completely held up in front of strongly entrenched "positions on the line Langemarck—Zonnebeke—Gheluvelt".

The *XXVII. Reserve Corps* attacked the centre of the 7th Division, between Gheluvelt and Keiberg with the *3rd Cavalry Division* on its left and part of the *52nd Reserve Division (XXVI. Reserve Corps)* on its right, without achieving any success. The remainder of the *52nd Reserve Division* and the *51st Reserve Division* similarly met the 2nd Division in an encounter battle, and were stopped. The opponent of the 1st (Guards) and 3rd Brigades was the *46th Reserve Division (XXIII. Reserve Corps)*.

In the *XXIII. Reserve Corps*, the next on the north, the *46th Reserve Division* advanced through the Houthulst Forest with the *45th Reserve Division* north of it extending to Woumen (two miles south of Dixmude) and drove the French and Belgian cavalry before them.

The *43rd Reserve* and *44th Reserve Division (XXII. Reserve Corps)* closed in round Dixmude.

Map 7. Nothing is said of the operations of the *III. Reserve Corps* on the  
Sketch 6. 21st. The narrative in its case also jumps from the 20th—when it was up against the sector Schoorbakke (about half-way between Dixmude—Nieuport)—Mannekensvere (3 miles E.S.E. of Nieuport)—to the 22nd October.

Thus, from the German point of view, the 21st was the second day of serious fighting for the *Fourth Army*, and brought a check to its advance, a set-back accentuated by the omission of any official mention of the operations of three out of the five corps on this day.

The three German cavalry corps were directed to attack on the

whole front from the Gheluvelt road southward to St. Yves, the *3rd Division* on the right in conjunction with the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, **Sketch 4.** and the *4th* on the left in conjunction with the *XIX. Corps*. Only small progress was made, as the British were found in "a strongly fortified position".<sup>1</sup>

The northern wing of the main *Sixth Army*, from south to north, **Map 13.** the *VII.*, *XIII.* and *XIX. Corps*, between La Bassée and St. Yves, **Sketch 5.** attacked with even more vigour than the *Fourth Army*, and though it only achieved some small local successes against the 3rd and 6th Divisions, and the *XIX. Corps* opposite the 4th Division "could gain no ground beyond its position";<sup>2</sup> the extension of the offensive so far south added very considerably to the gravity of the Allied situation, and prevented the withdrawal of troops for use on other portions of the front.

<sup>1</sup> See Poseck, pp. 192-4. The further action of the German cavalry has been discussed in a footnote to page 153.

<sup>2</sup> Poseck, p. 193.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES (*continued*)

#### BATTLE OF LANGEMARCK. I. AND IV. CORPS. 22ND/24TH OCTOBER 1914

#### 22ND OCTOBER. THE BRITISH ON THE DEFENSIVE ROUND YPRES

(Maps 1, 2, 16, 17, 18 ; Sketches A, 7, 8)

Map 16. SIR JOHN FRENCH'S message of 8.30 P.M. on the 21st  
Sketch 7. October had placed the B.E.F. on the defensive. All  
corps therefore issued orders on the night of the 21st/22nd  
for the positions occupied on the 21st to be entrenched  
and maintained. The Field-Marshal's opinion, which he  
expressed in telegraphing to Lord Kitchener, was that the  
enemy was playing his last card <sup>1</sup>—this was far from being  
the view of the subordinate commanders in contact with  
the enemy.

When the II. Corps, as already related, had on the  
22nd fallen back to a selected position in front of Béthune,  
although heavy fighting continued during the next few  
days, all attacks were repulsed and there was no change  
of importance on the right of the B.E.F. Without pre-  
judice, therefore, to the survey of the operations as a  
whole, the narratives of the II., III. and Cavalry Corps  
may be postponed, and dealt with separately,<sup>2</sup> and atten-  
tion first concentrated on the vital operations round Ypres.  
There, after desultory firing during the night, the Germans  
continued their attack on the 22nd October. They  
appeared to the British commanders to concentrate their  
efforts on particular portions of the Allied line ; but it is

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 32.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapters VII. and VIII.

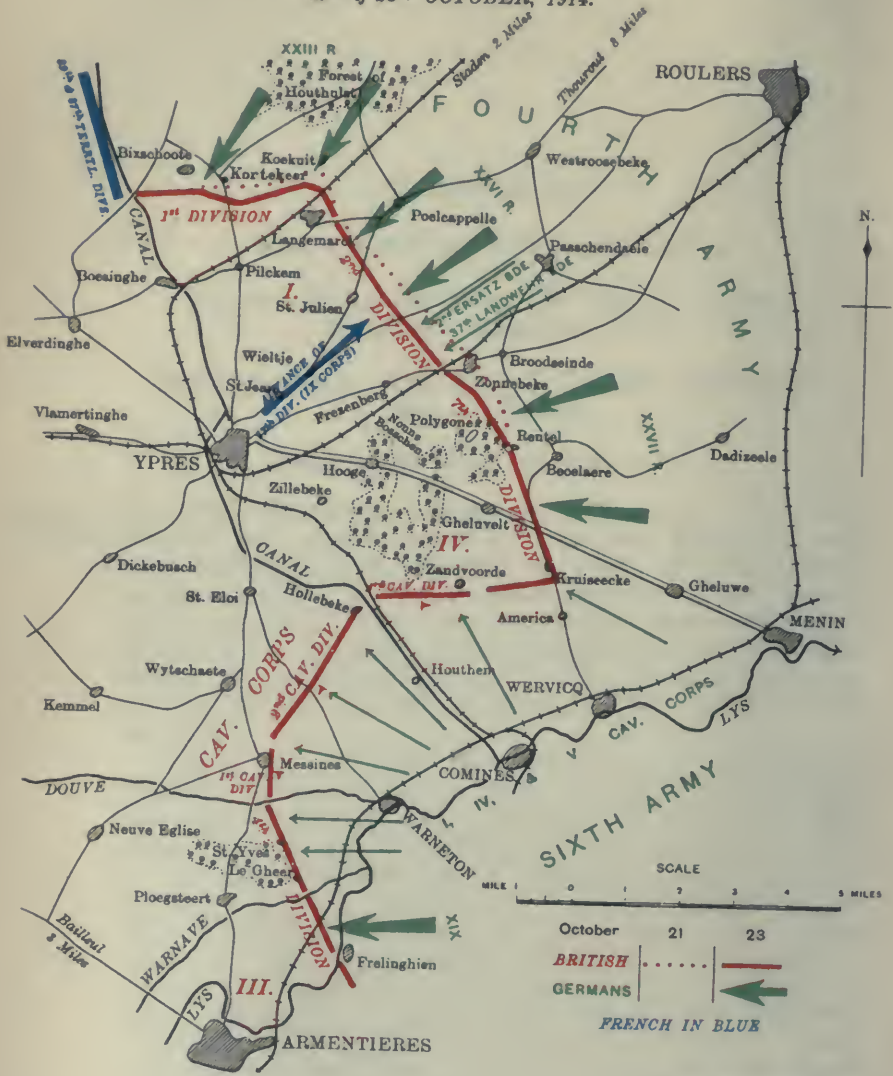




# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

SKETCH 7.

22<sup>ND</sup> & 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, 1914.



now known that they were attempting to break through on the whole Ypres front from opposite Messines to Bixschoote. Whilst hammering at the approaches to Ypres, they did not, however, abandon their operations against the La Bassée—Armentières front, nor their attempts to force the passage of the Yser opposite the Belgians. Early in the morning of the 22nd some two and a half battalions of the *III. Reserve Corps* secured a footing on the western bank of the river near Keyem and Schoore (respectively, three and five miles north of Dixmude). They also hoped, as it will be seen, to break through the French front on the canal between the British and the Belgians. 22 Oct.  
Map 7.  
Sketch 1.

Two principal attacks were made against the British around Ypres : on the fronts of the IV. and I. Corps. The first attack, from the south-east, against Zandvoorde—Becelaere—Zonnebeke, was assigned to the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* and the *V. Cavalry Corps*, and struck against the IV. Corps ; the second, from the north and east, against Langemarck and the Allied line near this place, came mainly against the 1st Division and was carried out by the greater part of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, with the assistance of a division of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps*.<sup>1</sup> Map 16.  
Sketch 7.

The British defences around Ypres at this time were, at best, short disconnected lengths of trenches, three feet deep. Hastily constructed during the few hours that the troops had been on the ground, they were without wire,<sup>2</sup> dug-outs or communication trenches, and lacked anything in the nature of a second line. The positions, however,

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 34-42. It is therein stated that "on the morning of the 22nd heavy artillery opened fire against the French positions on the Yser Canal to prepare the break-through. Unfortunately only the northern division (45th) was able to reach the sector allotted to the corps (XXIII.) and an Army order directed the 46th Reserve Division to the south-west against the line Bixschoote—Langemarck in order to help carry forward the attack of the XXVI. Reserve Corps, which was completely held up." In the detailed account on p. 36, the 209th and 212th Reserve Regiments, that is half the 45th Reserve Division, are mentioned as engaged against the British in Bixschoote (really the French, see fn. p. 180). Thus the 46th Reserve Division must have been employed to assist the XXVI. Reserve Corps against the British I. Corps.

It appears that the British (that is the 2nd Division) between Zonnebeke—Langemarck were not attacked because "the whole ground in front of this position could be enfiladed from Zonnebeke".

<sup>2</sup> At Langemarck there were some continuous narrow trenches with metre-wide traverses, dug by the French Territorials. Some wire was put up by two sections of the 55th Field Company R.E., in front of the 21st Brigade on the night of the 21st/22nd October ; and on subsequent nights wiring and clearing the foreground was carried out by portions of the field companies, of which there were only two per division.

seem to have been considered very formidable by the enemy, to judge by the following account.<sup>1</sup>

“On the morning of the 22nd a strong position lay to our immediate front. It followed a line Bixschoote—Langemarek—Zonnebeke—Reutel—Gheluvelt, and the I. and IV. British as well as the French IX. Corps,<sup>2</sup> all picked troops, had been located there. They had dug a well-planned maze of trenches behind barbed wire entanglements before a single German shell arrived to disturb their work.”

As there had been no time to prepare a position of this nature, the impression produced on the enemy is a well-deserved tribute to the high standard of marksmanship, the methods of concealment and stout defence of the British Expeditionary Force.

Whilst Field-Marshal Sir John French decided to remain on the defensive, General d'Urbal, commanding the French troops on his left—all of which were now westward of the canal—gave orders that the attack of the German *XXIII. Reserve Corps*, which was moving south-west against the French sector south of Dixmude, should be met by counter-attack. He directed General de Mitry to advance from south to north between the Yser Canal and the Forest of Houthulst, so as to take in flank any enemy who attempted to cross the canal between Bixschoote and Dixmude.<sup>3</sup> In pursuance of this plan, an infantry brigade and three batteries of the 87th Territorial Division started at 6 A.M. on the 22nd October from Ypres, passed behind the British and, after a pause in the British trenches behind Bixschoote, moved northwards from that village against Merckem (2 miles north of Bixschoote). Their attack brought them against a portion of the German *45th Reserve Division*; and about 2 P.M., as will be seen, they were forced to retire, and came back through the 1st Division lines, causing considerable confusion.

Meanwhile, the first morning reports that arrived at I. Corps headquarters began to give some clue as to the

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, pp. 41-2.

<sup>2</sup> This is a mistake. The French IX. Corps did not begin taking over part of the line until the afternoon of the 23rd.

<sup>3</sup> Thus d'Urbal, p. 6; but Boullaire, p. 72, mentions no such order, and says that the 2nd Cavalry Corps was ordered to support an attack to be made by General Bidon, who was commanding the two Territorial divisions. No hint of an offensive reached British headquarters. Sir John French had requested that the French Territorials should be moved north in order to clear his front.



German plans, and enabled measures to be taken to counter 22 Oct. them. The 2nd Cavalry Division (General H. Gough) reported the enemy massing north of Warneton<sup>1</sup> and later at Houthem; air reconnaissance reported seventeen bridges over the Lys, and various columns converging on Ypres; and, later, a German wireless message was intercepted at G.H.Q. which gave orders for an attack against the left of the position Zandvoorde—Becelaere.<sup>2</sup> This information appeared to indicate a movement against the southern half of the British semi-circle east of Ypres. Sir Douglas Haig accordingly directed the 2nd Division to be prepared to give effective support at Zonnebeke to the 22nd Brigade, which had suffered considerably in the previous days,<sup>3</sup> and sent his Corps troops—about 300 Munster Fusiliers, two troops South Irish Horse, and a section of howitzers—to the bend of the canal north-east of Hollebeke, on the right of the 7th Division, the danger spot on the preceding day.

Although in describing the struggle only loss or gain of ground will as a rule be dealt with at any length, it must be remembered that the fighting was almost continuous, hardly interrupted at night, and that the troops had no rest. Many successful repulses by fire of German attacks receive no mention whatever in the diaries—they were regarded as a matter of course. Rapid fire, though sometimes mentioned, did not mean reckless expenditure of ammunition for several minutes, but fire under control: "Two rounds", "Fire", "Repeat". To give a true picture of the long hours of patient and stubborn resistance there should be some mention on almost every page of bursting shells, blown-in trenches, hunger, fatigue and death and wounds. In a limited space it is difficult to give more than an outline of the action of the infantry and the cavalry, which henceforward was employed dismounted; and the troops must be imagined as fighting in small groups scattered along the front in shallow trenches, often separated by gaps amounting to two, three or even four hundred yards. These gaps mattered little by day,

<sup>1</sup> Apparently the 7th Cavalry Division and Jäger Detachment Petersen (4th, 9th and 10th Jäger) sent up to reinforce the V. Cavalry Corps. Poseck, pp. 145, 194.

<sup>2</sup> An order was sent to the V. Cavalry Corps to attack Zandvoorde—Gheluvelt. Poseck, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> General Monro, in consequence, sent the 1/Royal Berkshire (from his reserve brigade) to Frezenberg, behind the left of the 22nd Brigade, which was still at Zonnebeke station.



when they could be covered by artillery and the crossfire of rifles and machine guns—although many an officer fell in attempting to get from one group to another until connecting trenches were dug—but at night, in spite of patrolling, they offered easy means of penetration to the enemy. The supports and reserves, in addition to cover in trenches, had shelter from view in and behind the many small woods; and they took special precautions to watch the gaps in the line. Owing to the enclosed and wooded nature of the country, the artillery, the general organization of which was described in the previous chapter, was distributed over a wide area; the batteries usually managed to get cover from view on the reverse slopes of the ridges and in the course of time to obtain shelter for the personnel by digging into the slopes. The engineer field companies worked on defences when shelling permitted, but the sappers were often called upon to take up their rifles to form a reserve, to assist in repelling the enemy, and even to join in attacks. It was only at night that supplies could be got up to the troops and the wounded removed,<sup>1</sup> and as soon as it was dusk the streets of Ypres and the roads radiating from Ypres were crowded with vehicles passing backwards and forwards.

#### ATTACKS ON THE 7TH DIVISION NEAR ZANDVOORDE— BECELAERE FAIL

From 7 A.M. onwards the IV. Corps—which had the 6th Cavalry Brigade and 20th Brigade on the southern face of the Zandvoorde—Kruiseecke—Zonnebeke salient, and the 21st and 22nd Brigades on the eastern face, a total front of about six miles—was heavily bombarded; the fire affected particularly the sector near the junction of the 21st and 22nd Brigades, in front of Polygon Wood, where troops were not yet settled down. At daylight it had been found that the 22nd Brigade on the left of the line near Zonnebeke, had in the darkness withdrawn too far when brought back so as to blunt the salient, and that it was necessary to rectify this. The movement was successfully accomplished with the assistance of the divisional reserve, the 2/Scots Guards (20th Brigade), which came up through Polygon Wood, and temporarily filled the gap between the 21st and 22nd Brigades. But

<sup>1</sup> For the medical arrangements see Note at end of Chapter XVIII.

when the line was re-established one company of the Scots 22 Oct. Guards had to be left in it, as the strength of the two brigades was insufficient to cover the whole of the gap.

No serious infantry attack developed during the forenoon, although there were frequent bursts of infantry fire, and small parties of Germans occasionally came into sight among the trees and hedges that obscured the view. At 2.30 P.M. the I. and IV. Corps heard from G.H.Q. of the intercepted enemy order already referred to, directing a vigorous attack "on the left [south] of the Becelaere—Zandvoorde position". This information was confirmed by air reconnaissance, which reported strong hostile columns moving up from Quesnoy (4 miles south of Comines) and Comines. But the attack made was never serious nor was it pressed with any vigour.<sup>1</sup> In fact, nothing of importance happened on this part of the line except the recapture early in the day by a squadron of the Royals (6th Cavalry Brigade), of Hollebeke Chateau, which was to be held against all enemy attacks for days to come. Nevertheless, two battalions of the reserve of the 7th Division with a battery, and also the 7th Cavalry Brigade of the IV. Corps reserve from Zillebeke, were moved to the right; and towards 4 P.M. General Haig sent the 6th Brigade (less two battalions) from St. Jean to Klein Zillebeke (halfway between Zandvoorde and Zillebeke), where his Corps troops had proceeded earlier. He placed all these troops under the brigade commander, Br.-General R. Fanshawe, with instructions to cover the right of the 7th Division.

Whilst this attack on the right of the IV. Corps was threatening, another materialized about 3 P.M. against the centre and left of the 7th Division, but particularly against the 21st Brigade and junction of the 21st and 22nd Brigades near Reutel, already heavily bombarded for eight hours. Relying, no doubt, on the effects of this previous fire—for they were hardly supported by any artillery—German infantry advanced, in what appeared to be platoon columns of fours, over the crest of the ridge which runs from

<sup>1</sup> It was made apparently by the *V. Cavalry Corps* (on this day the *3rd*, *7th* and *Bavarian Cavalry Divisions*, with *Jäger Battalions*, *4*, *9* and *10*). "The attack could not be carried out on this day on account of the strong "hostile position, which had good dug-outs, without support of heavy "artillery." It is claimed that Pillegreins Farm (1 mile west of Houthem and well outside the British line) was captured. There was only a British patrol in it. Otherwise the line of the *V. Cavalry Corps* remained as before :—America—Kortewilde—with the *Bavarian Cavalry Division* west of the canal. Poseck, p. 194.

Becelaere to Zonnebeke, and down through the fields and scattered trees on the gentle slopes in front.<sup>1</sup>

Against the 22nd Brigade, which had vacated Zonnebeke the previous day, the attack was not pressed—possibly the objective desired was gained when the village was reached—but a very determined attempt was made to overwhelm the 21st. Br.-General H. E. Watts had the 2/Green Howards, the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers and the 2/Wiltshire in line, the 1/South Staffordshire, of the 22nd, on his left, and the support of twenty-eight 18-pdrs. and four 60-pdrs. (of the 2nd Division). Struck by gun and machine-gun fire as soon as they came well into sight, the German masses staggered, and, as one British battalion diary states, their dead and wounded were literally piled up in heaps, almost before a rifle shot had been fired. Led by their officers, however, some still struggled on: a few got within two hundred yards of the Wiltshire, and others actually penetrated a gap between the Green Howards and the Scots Fusiliers, but only to meet their fate at the hands of a reserve company. The *54th Reserve Division*, for to this the attackers appear to have belonged, recoiled; but, after a pause, made one last effort against the flanks of the Wiltshire, again to be driven back decimated by shrapnel and rifle fire. There were no fresh troops available to pursue them, and the Germans dug in during the night where they had taken refuge, in some places only four or five hundred yards from the British line.

At dusk the 21st Brigade was ordered to take advantage of its success to recover the trenches lost the day before near Poezelhoek; but it was still too heavily engaged for so large an operation. The company of the Scots Fusiliers and one of the Bedfordshire, which made the attempt, found the enemy too strongly posted to do more than drive off some snipers, and return with seven prisoners they had taken.

#### ATTACKS ON 2ND DIVISION BETWEEN ZONNEBEKE AND LANGEMARCK FAIL

Passing now to the I. Corps, on the left of the IV.: the 2nd Division—on the front between Zonnebeke and Langemarck—had no difficulty in holding its own though heavily

<sup>1</sup> This was the attack of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, which “fought for ‘the upper hand in the woods between Zonnebeke and Becelaere . . .’” It was admitted that it was unsuccessful, “the well-aimed fire from the ‘enemy’s prepared positions reaped a great harvest’”. “Ypres”, p. 42.



bombarded and annoyed by an incessant fusillade. In fact, **22 Oct.** no attempts were made by the enemy to close, until the evening—and then only opposite the 5th Brigade near Langemarck. There, in the waning light, a number of men of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, strength unknown, in a thick line, charged the 2/Worcestershire, 2/Oxfordshire L.I., and the 2/Highland L.I., and some individual men actually got within twenty-five yards of their trenches. For long after dark the Germans were heard collecting their wounded and dead; but seventy corpses and four wounded men were found close in front of the Oxfordshire in the morning. The casualties in the whole of the 5th Brigade for the 22nd October were only thirty-five. During the day considerable calls had been made, as we have seen, on the 6th Brigade, the reserve of the 2nd Division: the 1/Royal Berkshire had been sent near Zonnebeke to support the left of the 7th Division, and the 1/King's and 1/K.R.R.C., with two batteries, to Hollebeke to support its right. General Haig therefore detailed the North Lancashire from his corps reserve to replace them, and join the 2/South Staffordshire, the last battalion of the 6th Brigade, at St. Jean. At midnight the 1/K.R.R.C. was recalled there also, but the services of these battalions were soon to be required to assist the 1st Division.<sup>1</sup>

THE 1ST DIVISION HOLDS ITS OWN, EXCEPT IN THE  
CENTRE AT KORTEKEER CABARET

The 1st Division had been strung out in detached parties to cover the long flank, four miles in a straight line, from Langemarck (inclusive) to Steenstraat on the canal, which had been exposed by the retirement of the French. General Lomax had the 3rd and 1st Brigades in line, the 2nd was in corps reserve. The enemy began firing briskly as soon as it was light, and continued firing all day. Map 16.  
Sketch 7.

<sup>1</sup> The attack on the 2nd Division was made by part of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, supported by the *37th Landwehr Brigade* and *2nd Ersatz Brigade*, from Zonnebeke (inclusive) to Langemarck (inclusive). "The main body of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps* attacked the fortress of Langemarck from north and east." ("Ypres", pp. 42-3.) The attack from the east came against the 2nd Division. The village itself was held by the 1st Division. It may be mentioned that at the time the only works of a defensive nature at Langemarck were some straight trenches dug by French Territorials. Other trenches were made by the 26th Field Company R.E. during the next night (22nd/23rd October) and held by two platoons 1/Gloucestershire (see footnote, p. 187). These hardly entitle Langemarck to the rank of fortress.



Langemarek in particular was heavily shelled with high explosive, but as the line held by the 3rd Brigade was well outside the village, the bombardment occasioned no casualties. Although German infantry was seen at a thousand yards range and upwards, it did not attempt to close.

East of Bixschoote, opposite the right of the 1st (Guards) Brigade, from 11 A.M. onwards successive lines of German infantry could be seen, about a mile away, coming under shell fire, then disappearing and reappearing in the folds of the ground; but any attempt to get nearer than nine hundred yards failed for a long time, although "supported" by the concentrated fire of the *46th Reserve Division* "artillery in position along the south-western edge of "Houthulst Forest".<sup>1</sup>

About 11 A.M. also the enemy was reported moving from the north-east against Bixschoote in front of the British left, which the French Territorials had now reached. Some of these fell back, and the German advance was dealt with by the 6-inch howitzers on the canal near Boesinghe, and the XXV. Brigade R.F.A., and did not develop into an attack.

Towards 2 P.M. air reconnaissances reported a brigade of enemy infantry coming up to Mangelaere (two miles north of Langemarek). These troops reinforced those already engaged, and together they drove back the French Territorial brigade on and out of Bixschoote and over the canal.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, about 3.30 P.M., the Germans attempted to advance against the 1st Division, but met with no success, except in the centre. Here the 1/Cameron Highlanders held a series of unconnected trenches in a rough semi-circle north of the Kortekeer Cabaret, with one company near the cabaret itself, and only two platoons in reserve. In spite of an extremely stubborn resistance which was unsupported for once by artillery, very superior

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> The Germans claim ("Ypres", p. 36) that two regiments of the *45th Reserve Division*, the *209th* and *212th* (six battalions), took Bixschoote from the British, after "furious hand-to-hand fighting" at 5.30 P.M., but evacuated it in the night owing to an order being misunderstood. The troops, it seems, were assembled and marched back before their relief arrived. "The enemy, ever watchful, immediately advanced into the "evacuated village." The fighting must have been with the French, for the British, though they had some observing officers in Bixschoote on the 22nd, did not occupy the village. Their line ran through Steenstraat, behind it.

forces of the enemy penetrated as dusk fell into the north-western part of the semi-circle, and soon arrived in rear of the Camerons holding the eastern and north-eastern edge, and began to capture them gradually, a few at a time. About 6 P.M., therefore, Lieut.-Colonel D. L. MacEwen withdrew his battalion about a quarter of a mile, and re-formed it on the south side of the Langemarck—Bixschoote road. Between the Highlanders and the 1/Coldstream on their right there seems to have been from the first a considerable gap, estimated at as much as four hundred yards; and now at 6.30 P.M. a gap was reported on the other side between them and the 1/Scots Guards, and in the dark the situation appeared critical. Two companies of the Black Watch from brigade reserve were sent up to the right of the Camerons, and they stopped any further attempt of the enemy to exploit the gap on this side, although they were unable to regain the lost ground. To deal with the other gap on the left, General Lomax despatched the 1/Northamptonshire from divisional reserve at Pilekem with instructions first to get in touch with the Camerons. Colonel E. Osborne Smith, commanding the battalion, led it up the road which runs from Pilekem to the cabaret, the headquarters of Colonel MacEwen being in a small farm a few hundred yards short of the cross roads. Complete darkness had now come on and Colonel MacEwen explained to him the situation as far as he knew it. The Scots Guards having closed the gap on their side by extending their right, it was decided that the Northhamptons should attempt to retake the cabaret and the lost trenches. But although one company got nearly as far as the former, in view of the darkness and of the battalion having no acquaintance with the ground, the attack was eventually abandoned. The Northhamptons then assembled behind the right of the Highlanders.

Thus, as a result of the day's fight, the general British situation from Armentières northward was unchanged, except on the 1st Division front, where—although the Coldstream on the right near Langemarck and the Scots Guards on the left near Steenstraat had held their trenches—the line between them had been driven back by forces of unknown strength, but evidently superior in numbers.

At 9 P.M. the situation near the cabaret had been reported to General Haig. He at once ordered all the

troops he could collect—the 2/K.R.R.C., the last battalion in corps reserve, and the 1/Queen's from the 3rd Brigade reserve—to support the 1st Brigade; and later he directed the 1/Loyal North Lancashire from St. Jean and the 2/South Staffordshire, from the reserve of the 2nd Division, to be at Pilekem at 2.45 A.M. He placed the operations for the recovery of the line in the hands of Br.-General Bulfin (2nd Brigade), with orders to attack at dawn. This counter-attack was entirely successful, but before describing it, the other events near Ypres on the 22nd require notice.

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION OF THE BELGIANS AND FRENCH. PLANS FOR AN OFFENSIVE

Taken as a whole, the 22nd October seemed to have gone badly for the Allies; on the Belgian front a bridge-head had been gained by the enemy across the Yser; on the French front the counter-attack had failed and all troops were back behind the Yser canal; the left flank of the British 1st Division, exposed by the French retirement on the 20th, had been in considerable danger; strong enemy forces, now known to have been nearly double the number of our troops,<sup>1</sup> were everywhere attacking the thin British line round Ypres; and air reconnaissance showed more enemy troops moving up on Roulers and Gheluwe from Menin.

Help was, however, at hand. Grossetti's 42nd Division had reached the coast near Nieuport to support the Belgians there, and the French IX. Corps (General Dubois) was arriving and going into cantonments west of Ypres:—the 17th Division with its head at Voormezele (just south of Ypres) and the 18th Division at Poperinghe. Moreover, the Lahore Division had marched from Hazebrouck to the neighbourhood of Bailleul, its picturesque columns of Indian soldiers exciting the admiration and curiosity of the inhabitants as they passed along. Two battalions of the division, the 1/Connaught Rangers and 57th Rifles

<sup>1</sup> Six divisions, the XXVII. and XXVI. Reserve Corps, 46th Reserve Division, 37th Landwehr Brigade and 2nd Ersatz Brigade ("Ypres", p. 43), possibly also the 45th Reserve Division (see footnote, p. 180) and three cavalry divisions, against three divisions (1st, 2nd and 7th) and one (3rd) cavalry division. Some doubt existed at the time as to whether the 53rd Reserve Division was engaged at this date; but the regimental history of the 241st Reserve Regiment of the division shows clearly it was in action, and had heavy losses, on the 20th, 21st and 22nd. "Reserve Regt. No. 241", pp. 10, 11.



(Ferozepore Brigade), had been sent on early by motor **22 Oct.** buses to the support of the Cavalry Corps at Messines and Wulverghem. But although the reinforcements approaching Ypres, when all assembled, could only make the two opponents about equal in strength, General Foch directed an offensive should be carried out on the 23rd with what was available, in order to assist the British. Therefore at 7 P.M. General d'Urbal, from his headquarters at Rousbrugge,<sup>1</sup> issued orders for an immediate and general attack :—<sup>2</sup>

By the 17th Division (IX. Corps), with the 6th and 7th Cavalry Divisions attached, in the direction of Roulers ;

by the Dixmude garrison in the direction of Thourout ;

by the 42nd Division, with which the Belgians were asked to co-operate, in the direction of Ghisteltes (9 miles east of Nieuport).

The British I. Corps was requested to co-operate by attacking between the 17th Division and Langemarck in the direction of the Houthulst Forest. The request of General d'Urbal was supported by a letter to Sir John French from General Foch from his headquarters at Doullens, in which it was said :—

“ It is greatly to be desired that the whole British Army “ should support the French attack by acting offensively “ along its whole front, the left moving on Courtrai ” ; and he asked to be informed of the orders issued.

Copies of General d'Urbal's orders, fixing that the infantry attack should commence at 9 A.M., did not reach G.H.Q. and the I. Corps until a few minutes before 2 A.M. on the 23rd, and General Foch's note came still later. They could not be taken seriously. It was not possible for the Belgians or for the British to comply with General d'Urbal's wishes for a general attack at such short notice. He has complained that the British stood fast “ in the un- “ justifiable fear of seeing our two Territorial divisions “ give way on their left ”.<sup>3</sup>

General Haig, on receipt of the French communications, sent the senior staff officers of the I. and IV. Corps, Br.-Generals John Gough and R. A. K. Montgomery, to give verbal explanations to Sir J. French, and at once informed

<sup>1</sup> Marked on Map 1 Rousbrugge Haringhe. It is 7 miles north-west of Poperinghe.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> d'Urbal, p. 6.



G.H.Q. by telegraph: that there must be some misapprehension of the situation, that there was no time for concerted action, and every chance of confusion; for the attack outlined for the 17th Division would take it through the British front. He suggested that the general attack should be postponed until the 24th. In reply, Sir John French informed the I. and IV. Corps that if the French 17th Division advanced, the I. Corps was to give way to it, but to move forward sufficiently on its right to cover that flank. If in so doing, the corps had to take ground to the south and was forced to pass through part of the 7th Division front, the units of this division thus relieved were to be withdrawn into reserve.

As it turned out, the direction selected for the French offensive, against Becelaere—Zonnebeke—Passchendaele, did not prove fortunate. Apart from the fact that the Ypres ridge is practically double here, if not treble—for the Becelaere—Molenhoek and Keiberg spurs form a second crest behind the main one, and Terhand—Moorslede a third—the ground was more open than elsewhere, though well dotted with small copses and isolated houses, admirable for the supporting points and machine-gun nests of the defence. Further, the northern part of the Ypres ridge—north of Passchendaele, thence southward along the crest to Broodseinde (east of Zonnebeke) and thence along the bifurcation to Becelaere—was already in the hands of the enemy, and it offered splendid possibilities for observation and defence. It was obvious that this part of the ridge must be reconquered before any progress could be hoped for. Except a small portion near Broodseinde, none of it was retaken in 1914.

Sketch A.

### 23RD OCTOBER

#### THE FRENCH 17TH DIVISION REINFORCES THE BRITISH. THE SITUATION OF THE 1ST DIVISION RESTORED

Map 17.  
Sketch 7. General Bulfin, who commanded the 2nd Brigade, had five battalions at his disposal for carrying out his instructions to counter-attack the trenches round the Kortekeer Cabaret. To the three battalions immediately under his hand at 9 P.M. on the 22nd, he gave the following orders:—

To the Northhamptons to entrench where they stood,

behind the junction of the Black Watch and the Camerons, right and left of the Pilckem—Cabaret road, but mainly on the right ;

to the Queen's<sup>1</sup> and 2/K.R.R.C., then at Pilckem, to move at once and entrench—the former across the road junction behind the Northhamptons ; and the latter across the two road junctions behind the left of the Camerons.

By these measures the sector where it seemed probable that the enemy might try to exploit his success would be fairly secured. At 2.45 A.M. General Bulfin moved his other two battalions, the South Staffordshire and the North Lancashire, from Pilckem towards the cabaret. After a conference with the commanders of battalions at 4 A.M., General Bulfin settled on the following plan of attack. On the right of the road leading towards the cabaret the ground was open for more than a thousand yards. Over this he sent the Queen's, under Lieut.-Colonel B. T. Pell, to attack in order to attract the enemy's attention. On the left of the road the country was enclosed and undulating, and it was possible to approach more or less under cover to within a hundred and fifty yards of the enemy. On this side he employed the North Lancashire, under Major A. J. Carter, with the K.R.R.C. on their left to give what support they could by fire. The advance was to be made through the Northhamptonshire and Cameron Highlanders, who were left in position. The South Staffordshire he kept in reserve, having instructions not to use them unless absolutely necessary.

With the support of 30 guns of the XXV., XXVI. and XLIII. Brigades R.F.A. in position between Pilckem and Het Sas (the canal lock north of Boesinghe) and the 26th Heavy Battery, which shelled the roads by which enemy reinforcements could come up, the advance in the heavy mist of the early morning at first made good progress, although the battalions were unacquainted with the ground, and the positions from which to start had to be found in the dark. The North Lancashire were eventually checked by some wire erected by the enemy during the night, and two companies of the South Staffordshire were sent up to reinforce ; but so well was the movement timed that the whole front of attack arrived almost simultaneously within a couple of hundred yards of the Germans. Many of the

<sup>1</sup> Three companies only ; the fourth was escort to artillery.

enemy were already making off when the North Lancashire charged, but the sudden advance seems to have taken the others by surprise; and attention being for the moment taken off the Queen's, they also were able—the time being about noon—to cover the last hundred yards of open ground with astonishingly little loss.

By the recapture of the cabaret 54 Cameron Highlanders who were prisoners were released, and three hundred and fifty of the enemy taken.<sup>1</sup> The buildings and ground near were at once put in a state of defence. Then, seeing that the enemy appeared demoralized, a further advance, by the Queen's, the Camerons and the 2/K.R.R.C., was organized by Major C. F. Watson of the Queen's. The old Cameron trenches were cleared, and two hundred additional prisoners captured; but it was 3.30 P.M. before the Queen's, the Camerons, the North Lancashire and the K.R.R.C. were established in the recaptured line. Such a feeling of hilarity, however, prevailed, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that some of the men could be restrained from collecting souvenirs and persuaded of the necessity of preparing against enemy counter-attacks.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the recapture of the Kortekeer salient was in progress, the enemy continued to shell the whole of the I. Corps front and to make attacks on either side of the sector covered by General Bulfin's counter-attack. On the right, about 8 A.M., a determined attempt to capture Langemarck was made from the north. Strong German forces moving from Koekuit (2,000 yards north of Langemarck), and covered by very heavy artillery fire, collected in the depression of the Kortebeek stream midway between  
**Map 2.** the two places. Thence parties moved out and set on fire some farm buildings and stacks, and under cover of the smoke dribbled forward into some woods. From these an attack<sup>†</sup> was launched upon a half company of the 1/Gloucestershire—which occupied a length of deep traversed trench constructed during the night across the Langemarck

<sup>1</sup> They belonged to the 209th, 211th and 212th Reserve Regiments of the 45th Reserve Division. During the day prisoners of every regiment of the XXIII. Reserve Corps but one were taken by the 1st Division, which would appear to indicate that practically the whole of the corps was employed against it.

<sup>2</sup> The German official account describes this counter-attack by parts of four British battalions to regain a small piece of lost ground as a prepared attempt by large reinforcements "to break through our line and roll up "the part of the front lying to the north of it as far as the sea". "Ypres", p. 39. The success evidently caused considerable alarm.



—Koequit road by the 26th Field Company R.E.<sup>1</sup>—and 23 Oct. the 1/Coldstream Guards on its left, which held the line north-west of Langemarck on the right of General Bulfin's troops. At the same time, other Germans from the north-east attacked the 2/Welch, which was on the right of the Gloucestershire trenches. The right of the Coldstream was actually forced back a short distance and the Germans got within fifty yards of the trenches. Then the Welch and Gloucesters moved them down with rifle fire, inflicting enormous losses. The average number of rounds fired by the latter unit was reported as 500 per man. About 1 P.M. the attack slackened, and the enemy began to attempt a withdrawal, which, under pursuing artillery fire, soon became a disorderly rout.

About 1 P.M., also, the Germans made a demonstration against the 1/Scots Guards on the left of General Bulfin's counter-attack; but, if a serious effort was intended, it was repulsed without difficulty. A last attempt to regain the lost ground near Kortekeer Cabaret was made by the enemy at 5 P.M., when fresh troops began a series of attacks on the Queen's, who held the right of the salient. In the dusk, about 6 P.M., a party brought up two machine guns, which enfiladed the battalion; but this and other minor attacks were driven off with ease. On examining the ground, General Bulfin came to the same conclusion as Colonel MacEwen had done on the previous night: that the line near the road in rear was the best one, and he withdrew the troops from the Kortekeer salient and occupied for the night the new Cameron trenches just south of the Langemarck—Bixschoote road. The British had greatly increased their confidence in themselves by their successful counter-attack and greatly alarmed the enemy, but otherwise the result of the operation had been waste of energy and unnecessary loss of life. The casualties of the 1st Division on this day were 1,344; those of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps* which attacked it must have been very considerably heavier.

<sup>1</sup> Major H. L. Pritchard, R.E., had been sent up with the 26th Field Company to help the infantry strengthen their position on the road. On arrival he found the road undefended and a gap of about four hundred yards between the flanks of the nearest infantry battalions on either side. The company dug a trench across the road, another to the left front in advance of it, with a defensible communication trench between the two, and manned it until relieved at 4.30 A.M. by a half company of the 1/Gloucestershire. The trenches were improved by the 26th Field Company on the following night. This was the "fortress of Langemarck" of the German account ("Ypres", p. 42).



THE 2ND DIVISION HOLDS ITS OWN, AND AT NIGHT  
IS RELIEVED BY THE FRENCH 17TH DIVISION

Map 17.  
Sketch 7.

On the front of the 2nd Division, on the right of the 1st, from south of Langemarek to near Zonnebeke, held by the 5th and 4th Brigades, the enemy showed considerable activity on the 23rd, but there was no difficulty in dealing with the situation. Not until 5.30 P.M. was any attempt made by the Germans to close and assault. At this hour, an attack by large numbers in denser formation than the previous night was made on the left of the Worcestershire and on the Oxfordshire L.I., some groups again got within twenty-five yards of the trenches before they fell, and only a few unwounded men escaped under cover of darkness. The French reported officially next morning that 740 dead Germans were lying in front of the position of the Oxfordshire. Prisoners amounting to 500 in all were taken on the 2nd Division front from every unit of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, so that it is probable that both divisions of this corps were employed against the two brigades of the 2nd Division.

The appearance in the afternoon of the leading formation of General Dubois's corps, the 17th Division, brought but little relief to the right of General Monro. In pursuance of the orders to attack against Passchendaele, the head of the French advanced guard reached St. Julien about noon, greatly delayed by the congestion on the road. General Dubois then learnt that Zonnebeke was in the hands of the Germans,<sup>1</sup> and directed General Guignabaudet, the divisional commander, to deploy, covering the space between the Zonnebeke—Ypres railway line and St. Julien. By 2.30 P.M. the French had reached the front of the 4th Brigade, but were unable to pass beyond it, and the only result of their arrival was a large increase in the hostile artillery and rifle fire.

Arrangements were subsequently made for the whole of the front, instead of merely the centre, of the 2nd Division to be taken over by the French 17th Division, so that the I. Corps might be kept together, and at 7 P.M. divisional orders were issued for the relief to be completed by 11 P.M. Two British howitzer batteries, with escort, were left in position to assist the French. General Guignabaudet put all four regiments (12 battalions) of the

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 23.

17th Division into line, where eight British battalions had been, and was left, as he said, without power for offensive action. The 4th (Guards) Brigade, on being relieved, marched during the night to Zillebeke, and the 5th Brigade to the railway halt (Hellfire Corner) about a mile east of Ypres, where they arrived between 5 and 8 A.M. The remainder of the 2nd Division, less some detachments, assembled east of Ypres, near St. Jean and Potijze. 23 Oct.

#### THE IV. CORPS HOLDS ITS OWN

In the IV. Corps, on the right of the I., there was hard fighting, but no material change in the situation took place on the 23rd. From 9 A.M. onwards, when the mist lifted, the front of the 7th Division, already in close contact with the enemy's infantry, was again furiously bombarded. This was especially the case at the exposed southern shoulder of the salient round Ypres, on the Kruiseecke knoll, held by the 20th Brigade,<sup>1</sup> and, as on the 22nd October, at the point of junction of the 21st and 22nd Brigades near Reutel. Map 17.  
Sketch 7.

The line of the 20th Brigade was intact at the end of the day, and enemy infantry never closed up to it. Heavy losses were suffered by the 1/Grenadier Guards, of which two companies were moved about to support various parts of the brigade line and came under artillery fire from three directions.

The 21st Brigade had, as before mentioned, the Green Howards, the Scots Fusiliers and Wiltshire in line, holding a chain of posts, with a company of the 2/Scots Guards connecting it to the 22nd. As the German infantry came on, the pressure on the left of the Wiltshire became so heavy that a second company of the Scots Guards was sent up in support of the first. The enemy actually penetrated between the posts of the Green Howards and Scots Fusiliers, and, occupying a small wood, began to take the former battalion in reverse; but only to be swept out again by the reserve company. The divisional diary states: "The tenacity of this battalion [2/Green Howards] during this and the following days of heavy fighting was worthy of all praise. Though subjected to violent shell fire and

<sup>1</sup> Drummer W. Kenny, 2nd Gordon Highlanders, was awarded the V.C. for rescuing wounded men on five occasions under very heavy fire, and previous acts of bravery in saving machine guns and carrying urgent messages in very dangerous circumstances.

“ continued infantry attacks, they fought steadily on. “ When blown out of one trench, they moved to the next, “ and never wavered.” The 22nd Brigade was not so hard pressed, and was able to withdraw a weak battalion, the 2/Royal Warwickshire, from the left of its line, and to place it in reserve behind the junction with the 21st. The French 17th Division was now coming up, and the French 6th Cavalry Division, which had covered its right as it advanced to the front, offered assistance, and placed a regiment of cuirassiers at the disposal of the G.O.C. 7th Division ; but, although bombardment continued till dark and rifle fire went on all night, General Capper did not find it necessary to call on its services.

The 3rd Cavalry Division at Hollebeke—Zandvoorde, on the right of the 7th Division, had, relatively speaking, a quiet day, though the shelling was so heavy that the complete relief of the 6th Cavalry Brigade by the 7th was delayed until evening.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION ON THE NIGHT OF THE 23RD/24TH

Maps 1,  
17.  
Sketch 7.

Thus the operations of the Allies on the 23rd, except for the somewhat heavy losses, had been decidedly successful. The semi-circle round Ypres still held ; the attack, in spite of German divisions opposing British brigades, had been stopped ; lost ground had been regained ; and the advance of Dubois's IX. Corps gave hopes that the offensive might be resumed. Now that the French 17th Division had replaced the British 2nd Division in the line, there were in reserve near Ypres the latter division and the French 18th Division of the IX. Corps, besides the French 6th and 7th Cavalry Divisions, which had been attached to the IX. Corps. On the left of the Ypres salient the French and Belgians had held the line of the Yser against repeated attacks. The French 42nd Division had arrived on the coast at Nieuport, and had taken over ; but, nevertheless, the situation of the Belgian Army was reported to General Foch by its headquarters as critical.

Sir John French, in telegraphing home the results of the day, expressed himself as confident of the result, and

<sup>1</sup> The enemy opposite the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 20th Brigade was the 7th and 3rd Cavalry Divisions. Poseck (p. 195) describes the day as spent in alternate attack and counter-attack. Opposite the 21st and 22nd Brigades were the 54th and 53rd Reserve Divisions.

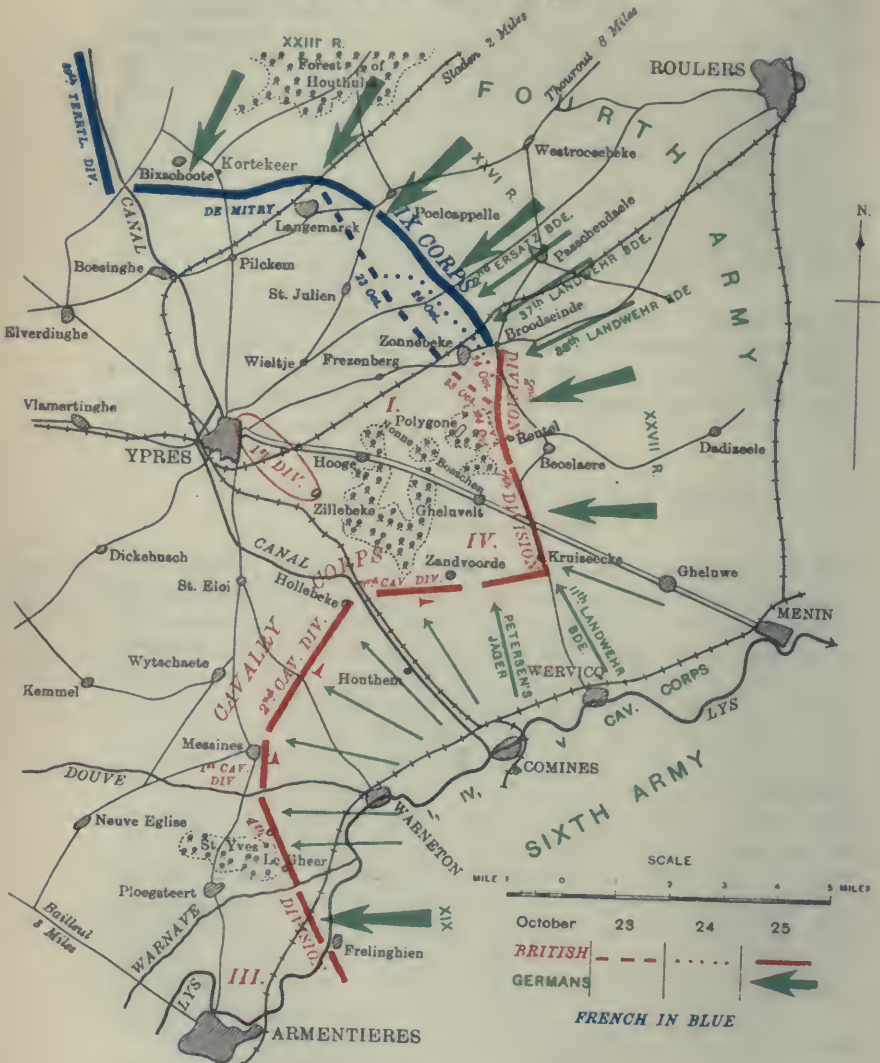




# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

SKETCH 8.

24<sup>TH</sup> & 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 1914.



Ordnance Survey, 1925.

even hazarded an opinion, in reply to a question, that there was a fair probability, though no certainty, of the French and Belgians driving the enemy from Ostend within a week. The events of the past days had not indicated that the Germans had received any reinforcements in the north, but an aviator had reported what appeared to be a newly arrived division near Courtrai, and the rolling stock that brought it still in the station. 23 Oct.

The Germans admit their ill-success on this day, but their official narrative<sup>1</sup> ascribes this to the numerical superiority of the Allies; but on the 23rd October, although, counting the French IX. Corps and the Lahore Division, the opposing forces were nearly equal, the enemy had the advantage in the homogeneousness and superior numbers of the troops actually engaged.<sup>2</sup> The German account is:—

“ With the failure of the *46th Reserve Division* to gain a decisive victory between Bixschoote and Langemarck on the 22nd and 23rd October, the fate of the *XXVI.* and *XXVIII. Reserve Corps* [which attacked the British 2nd and 7th Divisions, respectively] was also settled. For the time being, any further thought of a breakthrough was out of the question. . . . They had suffered heavily in the contest against a war-experienced and numerically superior opponent entrenched in strongly fortified positions. Even when the last reserves of the *Fourth Army*, the *37th Landwehr Brigade* and *2nd Ersatz Brigade*, had been placed at the disposal of the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, they could only be used to stiffen the defence.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> On the 23rd October the numbers between the Menin—Ypres road and the sea were:—

<i>Allies.</i>	Divisions.	<i>Germans.</i>	Divisions.
French IX. Corps . . . . .	2	III. Reserve Corps . . . . .	3
42nd Div. (Nieuport) . . . . .	1	XXII.     ”     ” . . . . .	2
Territorial . . . . .	2	XXIII.   ”     ” . . . . .	2
Marine Bde. (Dixmude) . . . . .	½	XXVI.   ”     ” . . . . .	2
Belgian, 6 divisions at strength of brigades (under 65,000 men)	3	XXVII.   ”     ” . . . . .	2
British I. Corps . . . . .	2	Marine Division . . . . .	1
IV. Corps . . . . .	1	37th and 38th Landwehr Brigades . . . . .	1
Lahore Div. (Bailleul; incomplete) . . . . .	1	2nd Ersatz Brigade . . . . .	½
	—		—
	12½		13½

<sup>3</sup> Twelve pages later (“Ypres”, p. 55) it is stated that these two brigades were sent up into the firing line “in addition to detachments of “the *Marine Division* and of the *38th Landwehr Brigade*”.

24TH OCTOBER

THE COUNTER-ATTACK NEAR YPRES BY THE FRENCH AND  
THE 2ND DIVISION. LOSS AND RECAPTURE OF  
POLYGON WOOD

THE OPERATIONS OF THE FRENCH IX. CORPS

Map 18.  
Sketch 8.

The operations near Ypres on the 24th October depended on the action of General d'Urbal, the senior French commander on the spot, for the British I. and IV. Corps had no orders from Sir John French, except that in the event of the French advancing<sup>1</sup> the former corps was to move forward sufficiently to cover their right. With these instructions, Sir Douglas Haig, as he had now the 2nd Division to draw on, seemed in a position to comply, though circumstances, as will be seen, compelled him to use the 2nd Division first to assist the 7th Division.

General d'Urbal's appreciation of the situation was whole-heartedly offensive. It is excellently summed up in the Special Order which he gave to General Dubois of the IX. Corps on the evening of the 23rd.<sup>2</sup> Translated this runs :—

“As we stand now the tiniest rupture of equilibrium at any point may incline the balance definitely in our favour. The enemy troops which you have on your front and on your left appear to belong for the most part to newly-raised corps without great value.

“Take advantage of this to press your offensive on Roulers with the greatest vigour, without troubling whether this carries you faster than the rest of the Allied line or not.

“Secure your flanks by flank guards on both sides and push on, whatever your neighbours right and left may do, without troubling about them except to ascertain what they are about. Try to make a gap.

“Attack to-morrow, as soon as it is possible.”

These were evidently also the views of General Foch, for on the 24th he telegraphed direct to General Dubois :—

“All the units of the IX. Corps are detained.<sup>3</sup> Make

<sup>1</sup> See p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> General Dubois points out in a note that this was only “partly correct”. The 18th Division was not ready until the evening of the 24th. There had been interruptions of its train movement.



“ your dispositions that all these units are employed to-day, 24 Oct.  
“ and that the action receives a new impulse. There must  
“ be decision and activity.”

General d'Urbal confirmed the instructions in his Special Order by an operation order, dated 23rd October 7.30 P.M., a copy of which was sent to British G.H.Q. “ for information ”. In this he directed a continuation of the offensive :—

On the right, General Dubois with the IX. Corps, two cavalry divisions, and a group of heavy artillery, was to continue to advance in the direction of Roulers. This movement was to be covered by a strong left flank guard.

In the centre General de Mitry, with two cavalry and two Territorial divisions,<sup>1</sup> in liaison with the Belgian Army, was to continue to hold the line of the canal, but he was to relieve the British 1st Division on the front Langemarck—Steenstraat as soon as possible.

In the north, the 42nd Division (General Grossetti) was to continue its attack in order to disengage the left of the Belgian Army and allow it to take the offensive.

The relief of the British 1st Division by part of General de Mitry's force was arranged between British G.H.Q. and the French so as to free the whole of the I. Corps—the 2nd Division having already been drawn into reserve—that it might be employed as a compact force in the general attack eastwards.

General Haig in his orders of the 24th, issued at 6.40 A.M., warned the 1st Division that it would soon be relieved, and directed the 2nd Division to take over the left sector of the 7th Division front from Poazelhoek northwards. In arranging the details of the relief, however, the divisional generals found it imperative, on account of the heavy artillery fire and the total lack of communication trenches, to postpone any movement until dark. Henceforward night reliefs became the rule during the battles of Ypres and until such time as communication trenches were dug.

Unfortunately the intentions of the French commander could not be put into execution either in the manner or with the rapidity that he hoped and expected they would be.

<sup>1</sup> Two of General de Mitry's cavalry divisions (6th and 7th) were handed over to General Dubois, and the former's command henceforward consisted of two cavalry divisions (4th and 5th) and the 87th and 89th Territorial divisions—the detached brigade rejoined on the 25th—with a front from Langemarck to Dixmude, about ten and a half miles. Boullaire, p. 74.



THE ATTACK OF THE FRENCH 17TH DIVISION<sup>1</sup>

The French 17th Division moved forward about 7 A.M. with dismounted detachments of cavalry on either flank. On the right, in Zonnebeke, little progress was made and the troops became involved in street fighting and a house to house combat, although on the left near Langemarck nearly a thousand yards of ground was gained. No occasion, therefore, arose at first for the British to make an advance through the 7th Division, as General Haig intended, to cover the French right; nor, owing to German attacks, as will be seen, could they have done so had this been ordered. But this inability was for the moment of no importance, for towards 11 A.M. the German *51st Reserve Division* counter-attacked the 17th Division, whose right flank, it is claimed, was at the same time exposed by the 6th Cavalry Division—its flank guard—turning southwards to offer assistance to the British 7th Division on the right. An urgent appeal was therefore sent by General Dubois to the 18th Division, the head of which was just arriving at Ypres, to hurry forward; and towards 4 P.M. two of its battalions came up on the right of the 17th Division. By this time, however, the German counter-attack had been definitely crushed, and the French were then able with increased numbers to resume their efforts to push on; and they could now count on the co-operation of the British. By night Zonnebeke was entirely recaptured, and the line of the IX. Corps advanced, on the whole of its front between Zonnebeke and Langemarck, from five hundred to a thousand yards.

## THE RELIEF OF THE 1ST DIVISION

The operations of the British 1st Division on the left of the French 17th Division can be very shortly related before proceeding to the battle of the 2nd and 7th Divisions on the French right. The division had a quiet day until dusk, and then the enemy contented himself with shelling its trenches and bombarding Langemarck heavily: the infantry of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps*, from all indications, had suffered too severely on the previous day to be employed again without a rest. During the morning the representatives of two French Territorial brigades arrived

<sup>1</sup> For details, see Dubois, ii. pp. 26-31.

to arrange for the relief of the division. It was fixed to begin at 6.30 P.M., but at that hour the Germans started to shell all the 1st Division trenches furiously, so that the relief was not complete until nearly dawn, by which time the British battalions had suffered considerable casualties. It was 8 A.M. on the 25th before the 1st Division was clear and concentrated in the area Ypres—Hooze—Zillebeke. It had suffered fourteen hundred casualties, mainly in the 1st and 3rd Brigades, during its four days' fighting. 24 Oct.

#### 7TH DIVISION : THE LOSS AND RECAPTURE OF POLYGON WOOD

Throughout the night of the 23rd/24th the whole line of the 7th Division—from Zandvoorde to Kruisecke, and thence northward via Poezelhoek and Reutel, in front of Polygon Wood, to near Zonnebeke where it was in touch with the French—had been kept on the alert, principally by rifle fire. Parties of Germans endeavoured, without much success, to establish snipers and machine guns near the British; they lost heavily, and 40 who penetrated through a gap in the line were captured by the Scots Fusiliers. It was not until 5.30 A.M. that the enemy recommenced a heavy bombardment of the trenches of the 20th and 21st Brigades.<sup>1</sup> Dug in sandy soil, these trenches had already lost all regular shape, and they gave little cover; but a far more serious result than this was that the sand thrown up by shell bursts got into the barrels and mechanism of the rifles, caused bursts and jams, and even interfered with and prevented the fixing of bayonets.

The German *XXVII. Reserve Corps* seemed to be making one last desperate effort to break through, though no account of such action, and of such momentary success as was attained, appears in the German official account. We are merely told that "the commander of the *Fourth Army* was forced to continue ordering all his corps to "attack to co-operate with the *Sixth Army*, and to pin "the enemy forces opposite him to the ground".<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> 7th Division war diary says 6.30 A.M., but lower formations give 6 A.M., 5.30 A.M., and, one, even 4.30 A.M.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 44. The *XXVII. Reserve Corps* is represented as being attacked and Beelaere almost surrounded, but then British progress was stopped by the bayonets of the *54th Division*. The numbers on the shoulders of the Germans who took part in the attack on the 21st Brigade happen to have been noted. They were 243rd, 244th, 246th and 247th

German artillery fire was accurate, and soon the 7th Division trenches were again largely blown in and destroyed. One infantry assault followed almost immediately after the opening of the bombardment, and others succeeded it about 7 A.M. and 8 A.M., but all three failed to break the thin chain of posts which constituted the British line, except at one point. Nevertheless, individual Germans and small parties penetrated through the gaps into Polygon and other woods, but they were dealt with at once; there is no truth in the stories that Germans remained for days behind the British lines, sniping officers and shooting ration parties. At times bullets were certainly flying in all directions in Polygon Wood, but they were not always enemy bullets; some were even traced to a battery trying to shoot hares with "hand-guns".

On Reutel spur, which runs parallel to the eastern face of Polygon Wood, the 2/Wiltshire Regiment held the left of the 21st Brigade line, at its junction with the 22nd Brigade—the point which had been so heavily shelled and attacked on the previous day. It appears that a company of the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers, some two hundred yards away on the right of the Wiltshire, was forced to give ground; and that the two companies of the 2/Scots Guards, who filled the gap on the other flank, had also been driven back early in the morning, and that no information of this had reached either brigade headquarters or the Wiltshire. In such an action the exact sequence of almost concurrent events is hard to determine; but there is no possible doubt that the two platoons forming the right of the 2/Wiltshire defending the southern edge of Reutel were overwhelmed by attacks in their front, flank, and rear about 8 A.M. The enemy then massed in the village of Reutel on the right flank and even in rear of the battalion and, emerging suddenly in great force, whilst all the Wiltshire rifles were fully engaged by a frontal attack, worked down the trenches from right to left and captured what remained of the companies, 450 wounded and unwounded men. Only the quartermaster, the sergeant-major and 172 other

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*Regiments.* The two first belonged to the 53rd Reserve Division, the two last to the 54th Reserve Division, both divisions of the XXVII. Reserve Corps. Walde's "Vormarsch im Westen 1914", pp. 162-4, actually gives an account from soldiers' letters of the unsuccessful attack of the XXVII. Reserve Corps on the 24th. This is overlooked in the official account. The statement about Becelaere may refer to the evening advance of the King's and Royal Berkshire (p. 200).



ranks answered the roll call next morning, and half of these **24 Oct.** men had not been in the line on the 24th.<sup>1</sup>

Before, however, this disaster occurred, General Watts, commanding the 21st Brigade, had reported to the 7th Division headquarters the desperate straits of the 2/Wiltshire and 2/Scots Fusiliers; and, shortly after, he added to his message that the enemy had succeeded in breaking through the line and had entered Polygon Wood, though, as on other occasions when Germans got into the woods behind the line, this did not preclude all hope that the troops in front were still holding out. General Capper immediately sent the Northumberland Hussars, in divisional reserve at Hooge, to check further enemy progress through Polygon Wood. The regiment carried out the task assigned to it in a thoroughly effective manner, though this was its first serious action—indeed, the first serious engagement of any Territorial unit. In combination with the 2/Warwickshire, which was in reserve behind the 22nd Brigade north of the wood, the hussars definitely checked the German advance, and, after considerable fighting, cleared the part of Polygon Wood which lay south of the racecourse. But though the Yeomanry suffered only slightly, the commander of the Warwickshire, Lieut.-Colonel W. L. Loring, was first wounded and then killed, and the battalion incurred nearly three hundred casualties. The wood was not entirely cleared until the 5th Brigade arrived later on.

The French 6th Cavalry Division, on the left rear of the 7th Division, again offered assistance, and General Capper gladly accepted a regiment, but, owing to the arrival of help from the 2nd Division, the French cavalrymen were not actually employed in Polygon Wood.

Meantime the other battalions of the 21st Brigade, supported by the XXV. Brigade R.F.A. and a section of the 112th Heavy Battery, still clung to their position though they had been under heavy fire for three and a half hours. The 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers to the south of the gap left by the Wiltshire was particularly hard pressed. Early in the morning Germans had reached its trenches, and only after a hand-to-hand struggle had they been expelled, forty of them being taken prisoner. When the disaster north of the battalion was realized every available man was deployed to form a protective flank. Against this the Germans advanced but were checked at

<sup>1</sup> The attack on the 2/Wiltshire was made by the *Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 244* (three battalions).



short range, Lieut. H. W. V. Stewart, commanding the platoon on the left of the line, shooting down eleven himself and forcing them to abandon two machine guns.<sup>1</sup>

The local situation had, however, been communicated by the 7th Division to General Monro, and he immediately placed the 2nd Division at General Capper's disposal to assist in restoring the fight. Then, sending his artillery to co-operate with that of the 7th Division, at 9.30 A.M. he personally ordered the 5th Brigade, then just about to billet and bivouac near the level crossing east of Ypres, to move up eastwards along the Menin road and gain touch with the 21st Brigade near Polygon Wood. A few minutes later he ordered the 6th Brigade at St. Jean to advance eastward by Frezenberg, and gain touch with the 22nd Brigade south of Zonnebeke. The rest of the 2nd Division he assembled in reserve a little east of Hooge.

About 11 A.M. the 5th Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Westmacott commanding<sup>2</sup>), in pursuance of these instructions, reached the south-west corner of Polygon Wood with the 2/Highland L.I. and 2/Worcestershire leading. The latter battalion had only just been issued with its rations for the day in 7-lb. tins of bully beef and one man in seven was carrying this unwieldy but indispensable package. The Germans were quite close, and 7th Division headquarters were found preparing to make a last stand with a few cyclists and officers' servants. The two battalions were immediately ordered to counter-attack north-eastwards through the wood to restore the line on its eastern edge, the Highland L.I. on the right and the Worcestershire on the left. Owing to the shape of the wood and the density of the undergrowth, there was great difficulty in keeping direction, but they pressed on, the Worcestershire somewhat in advance, the orders being to use the bayonet, so as not to fire into the British line to the north. Suddenly, east of the racecourse, they came upon the Germans face to face at very short range: so close were they to them that though there was some firing from the hip, the issue turned on the bayonet and hand-to-hand fighting. The enemy resisted stubbornly for a short time, but then broke and was hunted out of the wood amid British cheers. The line on the edge was regained, but as the Worcestershire reached it they were

<sup>1</sup> He received the D.S.O.

<sup>2</sup> Br.-General Haking, who was wounded on the Aisne, had not yet rejoined.

received by machine-gun fire and could not pursue further. 24 Oct. Their casualties in this very effective counter-attack, which is fully worthy to rank with the battalion's better known one at Gheluvelt, a week later, were 6 officers and about two hundred other ranks, whilst the Highland L.I., who met with less resistance, lost only five men.<sup>1</sup>

Time after time during the battles of Ypres the same phenomenon will be observed: the Germans having come on in overwhelming numbers and succeeded in penetrating our line, sat or stood about helplessly and without precaution. Either they were content to rest after reaching the objective that they had been given, or they did not know what to do next.<sup>2</sup> In any case, whether units of the Regular Army or newly raised Reserve formations, they usually fell an easy prey to the British counter-attacks.

The inter-mixture of British units near the eastern edge of Polygon Wood was now considerable, so a new line was taken up about noon by the Highland Light Infantry, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, behind the old Wiltshire trenches, along the front of Polygon Wood. The enemy retained possession of Reutel spur, which is separated from the wood by a small valley. The two remaining battalions of the 5th Brigade, the Oxfordshire and Connaught Rangers (less one company in line between the 20th and 21st Brigades), were stationed in support behind the right of the 21st Brigade, near Veldhoek.

#### THE 2ND DIVISION RELIEVES THE LEFT OF THE 7TH DIVISION, AND CO-OPERATES IN THE FRENCH COUNTER-ATTACK

At 12.30 P.M., as the French 17th Division was advancing, orders were issued by General Haig for the 2nd Division to be ready to move to the attack through the position occupied by the 21st and 22nd Brigades in order to support

<sup>1</sup> The opponents of the 2/Worcestershire were the *Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 244* of the *53rd Reserve Division* who had annihilated the 2/Wiltshire earlier in the day. Its war diary, kindly communicated by the *Reichsarchiv*, says nothing of the fight with the Worcestershire. After penetrating into Polygon Wood—the only German unit that did so—the regiment was assembled by order of its colonel, and the greater part of it, much mixed with parts of the *54th Reserve Division*, was collected in an old British trench 150 yards east of Polygon Wood.

<sup>2</sup> Since this was written, almost identically the same remark has been found in several German books with regard to the divisions of the British New Armies, e.g. in Schwarte's "Der deutsche Landkrieg", ii. p. 312, in reference to the Battle of Loos.

the French. Of this division the 5th Brigade was already engaged, as we have seen, in restoring the line of the 21st; the 6th Brigade, which had kept touch by means of a company of the 1/King's with the counter-attack of the 5th Brigade in Polygon Wood, in case help should be required, was ready behind the 22nd in support. Br.-General R. Fanshawe at once sent the 1/King's and 1/Royal Berkshire to take over the trenches of the 22nd. Later divisional orders directed the 5th and 6th Brigades to advance in echelon from the left when the French moved forward from Zonnebeke, but it was not until past 4 P.M., after a German counter-attack on their 17th Division had been repulsed, that this movement took place. The 5th Brigade was then still engaged in Polygon Wood and supporting the 21st, but the 6th was ready. The King's and Berkshire, with assistance from XXXIV. Brigade and XLIV. (Howitzer) Brigade R.F.A., and with the 2/South Staffordshire in support behind the right,<sup>1</sup> then advanced. They were met by heavy rifle and shell fire, but, though the ground—a succession of small ridges and valleys, dotted with small woods and houses—favoured the defence, by 7 P.M. the Berkshire had got forward more than a thousand yards, and were now on the Becelaere—Broodseinde road on the top of the ridge—where they captured two guns—in touch on the right with the left of the 1/King's, which had pivoted on its right. On the other flank they were even a little in advance of the French in front of Zonnebeke. In this fighting, Lieut.-Colonel W. S. Bannatyne, commanding the King's, was killed, and Lieut.-Colonel M. D. Graham, commanding the Royal Berkshire, very severely wounded.

Both battalions of the 6th Brigade now entrenched, so that the 2nd Division line, with portions of the 21st Brigade mixed with it, ran roughly north and south through the wood north of Polderhoek; along the eastern face of Polygon Wood; then curved north-eastwards to the Becelaere—Broodseinde road to a point in front of Zonnebeke. The opposing trenches were very close: at one place Germans were found on the other side of a hedge only six yards away.

The 4th (Guards) Brigade, except the Irish Guards, who were employed twice to assist the 21st Brigade, remained during the 24th in corps reserve east of Hooge.

<sup>1</sup> The 1/K.R.R.C., the fourth battalion of the 6th Brigade, was with the 1st Division, and did not return till 7 P.M.



ATTACK ON THE RIGHT OF THE 7TH DIVISION  
NEAR GHELUVELT

24 Oct.

We must now turn to the right of the 7th Division. After his offensive on its left near Polygon Wood had been successfully countered, the enemy, about 2 P.M., began a strong infantry attack, accompanied by heavy bursts of shelling, against the Gheluvelt cross roads—the point of junction of the 20th and 21st Brigades—at the same time shelling Gheluvelt itself. The brunt of the attack fell on the 20th Brigade, and on the 2/Green Howards, the right of the 21st. The pressure became so great that, first, half a battalion of the Connaught Rangers, and, at 3.30 P.M., a third company and the 2/Oxfordshire<sup>1</sup> were sent up, leaving only one company in the reserve of the 5th Brigade. The line, however, was held without employing these reinforcements. At 5 P.M. the enemy made another violent attack, and General Capper decided to use the 22nd Brigade, freed by the 6th having taken over its front, to meet it by counter-attack. Again the German efforts were repulsed by the fire of the troops in the line, and action by the 22nd Brigade was not required. Thus by night, except for Reutel spur, where the 2/Wiltshire had been overcome, the whole of the line held by the 7th Division in the morning was still in British possession, and on the left an advance of more than a thousand yards had been made by the 6th Brigade.

The 7th Division was beginning to show signs of exhaustion. Its casualties now amounted to 45 per cent of its officers and 37 per cent of its men: in the incessant fighting during the 22nd, 23rd and 24th October it had lost 120 officers and 2,700 men. One battalion, the Wiltshire, had been practically destroyed; three—the Scots Guards, Royal Welch Fusiliers and South Staffordshire—had lost over five hundred officers and men apiece; two—the Royal Scots Fusiliers and Border Regiment—had lost four hundred and more; and three—the Grenadier Guards, the Queen's and the Warwickshire—over three hundred. Moreover, the German attacks had prevented the relief of the 20th and 21st Brigades, which were therefore exposed to further strain and loss.

On the right of the 7th Division, the 3rd Cavalry Division during the 24th only suffered from occasional

<sup>1</sup> One company had previously been sent as support to the Scots Guards in Polygon Wood.



bursts of shelling; the report of the German cavalry opposite it is that the British position was too strong to be attacked.<sup>1</sup>

SITUATION ROUND YPRES ON THE NIGHT  
OF THE 24TH/25TH

Map 18.  
Sketch 8.

The first act of the Battles of Ypres 1914, officially designated "The Battle of Langemarck 21st-24th October 1914", was over. Practically it was an encounter battle, both sides endeavouring to attack and to break the other's front. Notwithstanding that the sudden falling back of de Mitry's cavalry on the 21st on the left flank of the I. Corps had much weakened General Haig's power of offence, at the close of the fighting the advantage lay with the Allies. Though outnumbered, they had not only held their ground, but made a slight advance near Zonnebeke. Moreover, they were left with the greater part of a British corps—four brigades—and nearly a whole French division in hand for a further offensive, whereas the enemy had, for the moment, put in his last reserves, and even *Landwehr* and *Ersatz* brigades from the lines of communication.<sup>2</sup> The new German Reserve corps had been no match for the British Regulars; in spite of their splendid bravery, they were mown down by the hundred. From intercepted wireless messages, it appeared that owing to lack of company officers, apart from losses, these Reserve corps had by the fighting of the 21st-24th been practically deprived of any power of further offence, as proved to be nearly the case.

The general situation near Ypres on the night of the 24th/25th October was that the British occupied the southern half of the semi-circle round the city, and the French the northern, with a point of junction in front of Zonnebeke, a general division which was to obtain during the rest of the Battles of Ypres 1914.

Anticipating the relief of the 1st Division by a few hours—it was not completed until daylight—the detailed situation was:—

3rd Cavalry Division	.	Hollebeke—Zandvoorde.
7th Division:		
20th Brigade	. .	At Kruiseecke (southern flank and part of the point of the Salient).
21st       ,,	. .	Thence to near Reutel.
22nd       ,,	. .	In reserve at Veldhoek.

<sup>1</sup> Poseck, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 55.



them—the Marine Brigade and 42nd Division. Opposite them were six German divisions,<sup>1</sup> supported by super-heavy artillery from Antwerp. Commencing on the night of the 23rd/24th, the German *43rd Reserve Division*, after a bombardment by 42-em. (16-inch) howitzers, delivered fifteen assaults on Dixmude. All of these were repulsed, and only a few trenches south of the bridgehead were abandoned.

On a front of four and a half miles south of Nieuport, though the Belgians were supported by a brigade of the French 42nd Division, the infantry of the German *6th* and *5th Reserve Divisions* and five battalions of the *44th Reserve Division* succeeded in crossing the Yser; but all efforts to get guns over failed. Only near the coast, where the bulk of the French 42nd Division was engaged, did the Allies seem to have any prospect of progress; and from there one infantry brigade had already gone, and the other was to go next day, to support the Belgian centre.

## NOTE

## THE SITUATION ON THE GERMAN SIDE ON THE NIGHT OF THE 24TH/25TH OCTOBER

**Map 18. Sketch 8.** By the evening of the 24th October Duke Albrecht of Württemberg, commanding the *Fourth Army*, appears to have realized that the new Reserve corps could not break through the French and British near Ypres. Further north he still relied, however, on pushing the exhausted Belgians and French out of the way, and opening the road to Dunkirk and Calais.<sup>2</sup> He therefore ordered<sup>3</sup> the *XXIII.*, *XXVI.* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, on the front from the Menin road to Bixschoote, "to maintain and strengthen "their positions, and take every opportunity of seizing important "points on their immediate front"; whilst in the north, "where a "decision seemed imminent", he directed that the attack should be continued. The *V. Cavalry Corps*, attacking the southern face of the Ypres salient, which already had three *Jäger* battalions with it, was reinforced by Schulenberg's *11th Landwehr Brigade* (five battalions),<sup>4</sup> and directed to continue its operations. The British 3rd Cavalry Division and four battalions of the 20th Brigade thus had two cavalry divisions and eight battalions against them during the succeeding days.

<sup>1</sup> *4th Ersatz*, *5th*, *6th*, *43rd* and *44th Reserve Divisions*, "detachments "of the *Marine Division*, and a few troops provided by the Governor of "Belgium". "Ypres", pp. 44-7.

Thus, as the six Belgian divisions were each hardly the strength of a German brigade, the enemy had a numerical superiority of about six to four.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Poseck, p. 195.



## CHAPTER VII

### OPERATIONS OF THE II. CORPS

#### THE BATTLE OF LA BASSÉE (*concluded*),<sup>1</sup> 23RD OCTOBER TO 2ND NOVEMBER 1914

(Maps 9, 19; Sketches B, 5)

#### 23RD-25TH OCTOBER: THE GENERAL SITUATION NEAR LA BASSÉE

WITH the approval of the Commander-in-Chief and without interference from the enemy, the II. Corps withdrew, on the night of the 22nd/23rd October. It swung back its exposed left flank and retired to a previously selected position running from the La Bassée Canal just east of Givenchy, through La Quinque Rue and east of Neuve Chapelle, to Fauquissart. Owing to lack of labour, tools and barbed wire, the position had been little more than sketched out by the Engineers, and the first business of the tired troops was to improve the defences. Map 9.  
Sketch 5.

The 3rd Division still remained on the left of the corps; it connected at Fauquissart with Conneau's cavalry corps and the 19th Brigade, which filled the gap between the II. and the III. Corps. Opposite the front formed by these two corps and the link between them were, from south to north, part of the German *XIV. Corps*, the *VII.*, *XIII.*,<sup>2</sup> *XIX. Corps* and the *I. Cavalry Corps*.

The fighting on the La Bassée front, so far as the valour and determination of the troops on both sides are concerned, was as desperate as that at Ypres, but it never had the same strategic or sentimental importance. The capture of the Béthune district, with its coalfields and resources, would undoubtedly have been a very serious loss to France,

<sup>1</sup> See page 77.

<sup>2</sup> This corps had been withdrawn, as we have seen (p. 169), from the Lys near Menin, on the night of the 18th/19th October.



but not an irreparable one like that of the Channel ports. Nevertheless, the Germans did confessedly endeavour to break through on the Arras—Armentières front all through October, and the Supreme Command sent up reinforcements for that object.<sup>1</sup> That the enemy was completely foiled is due to the resistance of the French XXI. and British II. and III. Corps. In the end he abandoned his ambitious scheme and, after the 29th October, contented himself with maintaining his position by small attacks and holding as many of the Allies as possible to their ground. But he failed even in this object, and was unable to prevent the extrication of the II. Corps from the line and the employment of the greater part of it at Ypres.

Every day had its battles, and much might be written on each of them. Here it is impossible to give more than an outline, omitting details and hardly mentioning the steadfastness of the wearied troops under bombardment and sniping by day and the attacks by night. The monotonous regularity of these last distinguished the operations near Béthune in some degree from those round Ypres. Paucity of gun ammunition and the difficulty of getting up supplies were felt just as much as in the north.

Sketch B.

It will be recalled that the country in which the II. Corps was operating is flat, intersected with streams, and water-logged. Thus the trenches dug in it could only be shallow, and cover had mainly to be obtained by building up breastworks, very conspicuous targets, though fortunately artillery ground-observation, north of the canal, was almost impossible owing to the nature of the country. It was not until the 28th October that a good supply of sandbags, almost indispensable in building breastworks, and barbed wire was received. In the artillery the 18-pdr. brigades, as elsewhere, were allotted to work with infantry brigades, the 60-pdrs. and howitzers being kept in hand to deal with the enemy's artillery.<sup>2</sup>

The Germans were quite unprepared for the withdrawal of the II. Corps, and the 23rd October passed without any incident except the shelling of the line vacated by the II. Corps and the arrival of the Lahore Division<sup>3</sup> (Lieut.-General H. B. B. Watkis) at Estaires. This place had been

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> The expenditure of artillery ammunition in the 5th Division between 17th and 23rd October had been, per gun per diem, 18-pdr., 60, double the official "ration"; howitzer, 28; 60-pdr., 16 rounds.

<sup>3</sup> For Order of Battle, see Appendix 1.

selected as the place of assembly for the Indian Corps, so that it would be conveniently situated to support either the II. or III. Corps, as required. There, after a conference between Sir John French and Sir H. Smith-Dorrien and General Watkis, the division was placed under the orders of the II. Corps. The Lahore Division was very weak in rifles, for not only was the strength of its battalions low (700-800), but it was without the Ferozepore Brigade, detached to support Allenby's cavalry corps, and the Sirhind Brigade left in Egypt. Its third infantry brigade, the Jullundur, was at once employed in strengthening defences, and during the night of the 23rd/24th it relieved Conneau's cavalry corps and filled the gap between the left of the II. Corps at Fauquissart and the 19th Brigade at Rouges Banes. Thus the British line was made complete from Givenchy to Ypres. Although no attack was made on the 23rd, small parties of German infantry unsuccessfully endeavoured to follow up the retirement of the II. Corps, and Festubert was shelled by heavy howitzers.

The situation on the morning of the 24th was :—

5th Division :

15th Brigade<sup>1</sup> (with a French battalion attached)      The eastern edge of Givenchy due north to Festubert. Map 9.  
Sketch 5.

<sup>1</sup> At this time the composition of the infantry brigades of the II. Corps was :—

13th Brigade . . . . . (Lieut.-Colonel Martyn)  
(definitely appointed on 2 Nov., but wounded on the 7th Nov.)

2/Manchester of the 14th ;  
1/Cheshire of the 15th ;  
1/Bedfordshire of the 15th.

14th Brigade . . . . . (Br.-General Stanley Maude)

1/East Surrey ;  
1/D.C.L.I. ;  
2/K.O.S.B. of the 13th ;  
2/K.O.Y.L.I. of the 13th ;  
3/Worcestershire of the 7th.

15th Brigade . . . . . (Br.-General Count Gleichen)

1/Dorsetshire ;  
1/Norfolk ;  
1/Devonshire of the 14th ;  
2/Duke of Wellington's of the 13th.

7th Brigade . . . . . (Br.-General McCracken)

1/Wiltshire ;  
2/Royal Irish Rifles ;  
2/South Lancashire ;  
1/Royal West Kent of the 13th.

13th Brigade	. . .	Thence to La Quinque Rue.
14th Brigade	. . .	Thence to cross roads three-quarters of a mile south of Neuve Chapelle.
3rd Division :		
7th Brigade	. . .	Thence to in front of Neuve Chapelle.
9th Brigade	. . .	Thence to Pietre.
8th Brigade	. . .	Thence to Fauquissart.
Lahore Division :		
Jullundur Brigade <sup>1</sup> and 34th Pioneers	. . .	Fauquissart to Rouges Banes.
19th Brigade	. . .	Thence past La Boutillerie to west of Bridoux.

At 2 A.M. on the 24th, the enemy, after some attempts by small parties to reach the 3rd Division trenches, commenced heavy firing; and soon after daybreak infantry in large numbers, easily distinguishable by their grey covered spiked helmets, were seen approaching, mostly on the front of the 3rd Division on the left of the corps line. This attack seems to have been part of a general attack of the *Sixth Army* extending from the La Bassée Canal right up to the Lys at Frélinghien.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the fine targets which the Germans presented, they were easily dealt with by the skilfully handled British artillery and prevented from coming to close quarters.

This failure seems to have determined the enemy to try his luck in night fighting; for at dusk he again opened a series of attacks: the first against the 7th Brigade, the right of the 3rd Division, south of Neuve Chapelle. This was continued until after midnight, but was repulsed

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8th Brigade . . . . .	(Br.-General Bowes)
2/Royal Scots ;	
1/Gordon Highlanders ;	
4/Middlesex ;	
2/Suffolk (arrived from G.H.Q. on 24 October to replace the 2/Royal Irish, which, after the disaster at Le Pilly, was sent to St. Omer to be re-formed).	
9th Brigade . . . . .	(Br.-General Shaw)
1/Lincolnshire ;	
1/Royal Scots Fusiliers ;	
1/Northumberland Fusiliers ;	
4/Royal Fusiliers.	

<sup>1</sup> Shown as 8th Indian Infantry Brigade on Map 9.

<sup>2</sup> For the events in the III. Corps see Chap. VIII.



with heavy loss, particularly in front of the 1/R. West Kent and 1/Wiltshire. Later, in the early morning of the 25th, the enemy actually got into the trenches of the 2/Royal Irish Rifles, who were very short of officers; but he was expelled after hand-to-hand fighting. Another attack at 11 A.M. at the same place was somewhat more successful, and the help of detachments of the 4/Royal Fusiliers and 1/Lincolnshire of the 9th Brigade was required before the line was restored.

From 9 P.M. on the 24th onwards, a determined night attack was also made on the 8th Brigade on the left of the 3rd Division line, and on the 15th Sikhs of the Jullundur Brigade standing next to it. The 1/Gordon Highlanders, who were on the extreme left of the 8th Brigade—with a gap of some four hundred yards between them and the Sikhs—not having even a wire fence in front to check a rush, were after hand-to-hand fighting driven out of their trenches. Fortunately the 2/Royal Scots and the 15th Sikhs on either side of the gap stood firm, although the Germans concentrated many heavy guns on the Indian brigade, whose battalions, being new to the war, exposed themselves freely and fearlessly and suffered heavily in consequence. The lost trenches were retaken soon after midnight by a counter-attack of the 4/Middlesex, the brigade reserve, put in by General Bowes and gallantly led by Lieut.-Colonel C. P. A. Hull. The casualties of the Gordon Highlanders, however, amounted to over two hundred, and the 15th Sikhs had nearly the same number; those of the Royal Scots were 2 officers and 7 men. Elsewhere the enemy was driven off without being able to close; he left behind large numbers of dead and prisoners belonging to the 16th, 53rd, 56th, and 57th *Infantry Regiments* of the 14th *Division, VII. Corps*, and the 119th and 125th *Infantry Regiments* of the 26th *Division* of the XIII. *Corps*, whilst, near Givenchy, a man of the 40th *Regiment, 28th Division, XIV. Corps* was captured.

In spite of the mishap to the Gordon Highlanders—who, after the retreat from Mons and the disaster of the 26th August, in which they lost 88 per cent of their numbers and all their officers except five, were an absolutely new battalion—the generally successful result of the night's fighting was most opportune and encouraging. The II. *Corps* had now been fighting continuously for thirteen days with heavy losses, particularly in officers, following on heavy casualties at Mons, Le Cateau and the Aisne.



Doubts therefore had begun to arise in the minds of officers of all ranks whether the battalions, which now contained an overwhelming proportion of Reservists, Special Reservists and young soldiers, would after such a severe ordeal be able to withstand a really determined attack. The enemy offensive at Ypres having apparently ceased, and the counter-attack of the French IX. and British I. Corps having been begun, all seemed to be going well.

25 Oct.  
Map 19.  
Sketch 5.

As a result of its success, the II. Corps on the 25th had a quiet day except for artillery fire, the enemy's being more than usually accurate as the weather permitted aeroplane observation. His infantry kept 700-900 yards away, except in front of the 5th Division, where the opposing lines were 400 to 600 yards apart. During the morning the bombardment became so heavy that some battalions were withdrawn from their trenches, to reoccupy them at night; but in Givenchy, in the words of the corps report, the Devons, "magnificent but weary", held on. Work on defences was continued whenever possible, the engineers collecting fencing posts and plain wire from the neighbouring country by day and erecting them at night in front of the line to form entanglements.

On the evening of the 25th General Smith-Dorrien considered that the enemy attacks had reached their limit for the time being, but that the situation gave cause for anxiety on account of the heavy losses and the exhaustion of the men. After a personal interview with Sir John French at G.H.Q. the latter made every effort to help him, for a break in the line near La Bassée would entirely upset any hopes of a successful offensive further north. He directed General Allenby to send a cavalry brigade, a battery and a battalion to Vieille Chapelle, three miles behind the front of the 3rd Division; and he also sent two batteries of 4.7-inch guns and the naval armoured train "Jellicoe" which had been at Antwerp,<sup>1</sup> to the II. Corps, and authorized the expenditure of 18-pdr. ammunition to be raised from thirty to sixty rounds per gun per diem.

General Maud'huy, on the right of the II. Corps, offered assistance, and arranged to send two battalions to support the 5th Division, in addition to the battalion already in Givenchy; and General Conneau moved his cavalry corps behind the left flank of the 3rd Division. Over a thousand

<sup>1</sup> It worked on the railway line along the canal bank towards La Bassée, and its presence had a most cheering effect on the troops.

reinforcements also arrived, followed by another thousand **26 Oct.** on the 27th, but, even with these, battalions were only about seven hundred strong.

#### 26TH/27TH OCTOBER : THE LOSS OF NEUVE CHAPELLE

Enemy patrols on the night of the 25th/26th were very active, as they had been on the 24th/25th. At dawn a determined attack was made on the 2/Manchester and 1/Bedfordshire, north of Givenchy, by Germans who had crept up close during the night. They were driven back by fire, which had chiefly to be directed by sound, as the troops had not yet got light-ball pistols or other illuminating apparatus. Later in the day the French reinforcements took over the defence of Givenchy<sup>1</sup> and enabled the 5th Division to add another unit to its reserve, which now amounted to three battalions. In the afternoon another attack was made in some force on the left of this division ; but the Germans who approached the trenches, some actually breaking in at one point, were all accounted for. This attack was a preliminary to a still more determined effort, preceded by a very heavy and accurate bombardment, made at 4 P.M. from trenches five hundred yards off, against the left battalion, the 2/K.O.Y.L.I., of the 5th Division, and the right wing of the 3rd Division near Neuve Chapelle, a sector held by the 1/R. West Kent, 1/Wiltshire and half of 2/R. Irish Rifles of McCracken's brigade, and half of 4/Royal Fusiliers of Shaw's. All these battalions suffered severely, and in some cases were forced by the constant fall of heavy shells to vacate their trenches. Part of the line of the Irish Rifles, who had already been engaged in two severe struggles in the previous twenty-four hours, was broken, and the enemy then pressed through Neuve Chapelle. But the battalions on either side of the gap, the Royal Fusiliers and the Wiltshire, held on ; and the reserve company of the latter, only about eighty men strong, stopped the Germans at the western exits, and drove them back into the burning village.

Just at this time, about 6 P.M., the 1/Lincolnshire, from divisional reserve, and about three hundred French cyclists, lent by the ever-willing General Conneau, were hurried up to support General McCracken ; and the remaining half battalions of the 4/Royal Fusiliers and 2/Irish Rifles and the remnants of the 2/South Lancashire,

<sup>1</sup> See General Maud'huy's letter at end of Chapter III.

the brigade reserve, were sent up by him towards Neuve Chapelle. But, owing to the darkness and confusion of troops, they had considerable difficulty in getting forward, and it was not until some little time had elapsed that Colonel McMahon of the Royal Fusiliers, the senior officer on the spot, was able to organize a counter-attack from the western side of Neuve Chapelle. Only two companies each of the Royal Fusiliers and the Irish Rifles, with a company of the Wiltshire, were immediately available, and these, led by Captain P. S. Rowan, the adjutant of the Wiltshire,<sup>1</sup> entered the village, now in ruins and on fire, and drove the Germans out. The old British trenches beyond still remained in the hands of the enemy, and, in view of the difficulty, without the support of howitzers, of dislodging his machine guns and snipers from the isolated houses—particularly from a triangle of buildings north of the village—it was decided to defer further operations until morning. A line was more or less re-constituted with the bulk of the Wiltshire and Irish Rifles in what was subsequently known as the Smith-Dorrien trench east of the village; their left flank, where the line broke back, was covered by a company of the Wiltshire in the village itself. To its left rear were the 4/Royal Fusiliers, in touch with the refused flank of the Northumberland further north.

The fighting in Neuve Chapelle had been severe, and the losses heavy in the already weak battalions; some two hundred of the Irish Rifles were casualties, and almost as many of the 4/Royal Fusiliers, including 8 officers. Eighty of the Northumberland Fusiliers and 70 of the Wiltshires, who had lost 79 on the previous day, also fell.

Sir John French visited II. Corps headquarters during the 26th, and promised reinforcements. His orders to the 27 Oct. corps for the 27th<sup>2</sup> directed it to maintain and strengthen its position, but to seize every opportunity for vigorous local offensive. Every endeavour was made to comply, although the situation at Neuve Chapelle, when morning dawned, proved to be most unsatisfactory. The Germans were not only holding the triangle of buildings north of the village, with snipers in the many isolated houses near it, but were in occupation of the old British trenches immediately north of the Irish Rifles, where the line broke back. About 7.30 A.M. the Irish Rifles endeavoured to

<sup>1</sup> He was dangerously wounded, and was awarded the D.S.O.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 35.



recover these trenches, but the enemy, seeing how weak the battalion was, lost no time in working round its flank and rear, and the two companies, all that remained of the battalion, were, about 9 A.M., driven out of their trenches and through Neuve Chapelle, leaving four-fifths of their number killed, wounded or prisoner. 27 Oct.

Meantime Colonel McMahon was endeavouring to continue the counter-attack to recover the triangle of houses and the lost trenches north of the village; but units were so mixed up that it was most difficult to communicate orders, and it was not until about 10 A.M. that it was launched. His force, now consisting of the remains of the Royal Fusiliers, part of the Northumberland Fusiliers, South Lancashire, and the French cyclists, though supported by four British batteries (XLIII. Brigade R.F.A. and 128th Howitzer Battery) and by seven French batteries from Conneau's cavalry corps, which General Wing had borrowed, made little progress, owing to the snipers and machine guns now firmly established in the ruins of the houses. At 11 A.M. two companies of the 1/Lincolnshire of Shaw's brigade and 600 chasseurs à pied—a further loan from General Conneau—were sent to reinforce Colonel McMahon; and the 9th Bhopal Infantry of the Ferozepore Brigade, lately with the Cavalry Corps, and two companies of the 47th Sikhs, were ordered to join him. He thus had eight infantry units to control.

The enemy seemed quiet on most of the remainder of the 3rd Division front, but made several violent assaults on the Jullundur Brigade north of it;<sup>1</sup> his efforts were mainly directed to massing troops of the *14th Division* for a further effort against Neuve Chapelle, in and behind the Bois du Biez, a large wood about half a mile south-east of the village. By 1.30 P.M. McMahon's counter-attack had made some progress north of Neuve Chapelle, but the enemy had been reinforced and was resisting strongly. In the Smith-Dorrien trench, east of the village, the front line of the Wiltshire and a few men of the Irish Rifles still held on; but about 2.30 P.M. the Germans, having completed their preparations, fell on this detachment, as earlier in the day they had caught the Irish Rifles. Attacking in front and from the northern flank, by 3.30 P.M., although held in front, they had almost completely surrounded the small force. The 1/Wiltshire lost eight officers and three

<sup>1</sup> See p. 216.



hundred other ranks, so that, when reorganized next day, the battalion, including its reserve which was not involved, could muster no more than three companies of a hundred men each, the third consisting entirely of reinforcements. The Irish Rifles now numbered less than two hundred, including sixty reinforcements.

Part of the Germans attempted to press on in pursuit beyond Neuve Chapelle, but the reserve company of the Wiltshire and two companies of the South Lancashire—not two hundred and fifty men in all—interposed, about five hundred yards from the village. They drove back the pursuers, who, though soon reinforced, were successfully held in check. The enemy now attempted to surround the Royal West Kents who were south of the trenches where the Wiltshire had been; but, though their left was enveloped—they organized a line at right angles to the front to counter this—and they were fired into from the rear, and the commanding officer, Major Buckle, and his adjutant were killed, the West Kents held on in a most magnificent fashion until the 9th Bhopal Infantry arrived and, taking the Germans in flank, drove them back into Neuve Chapelle. This Indian battalion then took position on the left of the West Kents; but General McCracken was compelled to use his last reserve, the 20th and 21st Companies Sappers and Miners (the field engineer companies of the Lahore Division), to fill up the gap between the left of the Bhopal Infantry and the southern flank, the Northumberland Fusiliers, of Shaw's brigade.

When news of the German attack on the Royal West Kents reached the 14th Brigade, Br.-General Stanley Maude, whose troops were on their right, at once sent the Cornwall L.I., his brigade reserve, to their assistance. But thanks to the action of the Bhopals, the battalion was not required, and at 5.15 P.M. it was ordered to move northward in rear of the line, and attack in flank the Germans who had pursued the survivors of the Wiltshire through Neuve Chapelle. But before the Cornwall L.I. could take action it grew dark and the German movement had already been stopped by the reserve company of the Wiltshire. Nevertheless, the G.O.C., 5th Division, ordered a counter-attack to be organized, and sent to General Maude the Dorsets and Cheshire and two companies of the Bedfords for the purpose. On reaching the ground and communicating with General McCracken, General Maude found the situation had changed: the British line was

more or less closed, and the Germans were not advancing 27 Oct. from Neuve Chapelle. They had occupied the village, and from it they could be dislodged only by an attack from the north-west. Further, the troops allotted for the counter-attack were the mere remnants of battalions; the Cheshire, for instance, were commanded by an officer of another regiment, and had only one other regimental officer available for duty. As the line was merely bent back and not endangered, General Maude decided not to launch a counter-attack. His decision, when reported, was approved by the divisional and corps commanders.

It remains to show what had been happening from 2.30 P.M. onwards to Colonel McMahon's counter-attack on the north side of Neuve Chapelle.

The 4/Royal Fusiliers, reduced to about four hundred men, and the 1/Lincolnshire in little better condition, with the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers co-operating north of them, were unable to progress further than the outskirts of the village, for the country was dotted with cottages from which snipers and machine guns in comparative safety brought a heavy fire to bear on the advance. Towards 5 P.M. a half battalion of the 47th Sikhs arrived in support of the Lincolnshire; but more than these three or four hundred men were necessary to carry the counter-attack forward. Enfiladed from both flanks and exhausted by continuous fighting and want of sleep, the men could do no more. All reinforcements available having already been diverted to stop the gap at Neuve Chapelle, McMahon's counter-attack was abandoned, and as soon as it was dark his troops dug a new line of trenches on the western outskirts of the village.

At 9.45 P.M. the 3rd Division issued orders confirming and approving the occupation of a line west of the village. The survivors of the Wiltshire, South Lancashire and Royal Irish Rifles—a total of less than six hundred men—were collected at Richebourg St. Vaast. Here the 2nd Cavalry Brigade sent by Sir John French from the north also arrived.

Thus, the day's fighting resulted in the enemy gaining possession of Neuve Chapelle. The British line now ran in a curve round the village, with the enemy only about one hundred yards distant. It was held from right to left by the West Kents in their original trenches; then, in succession, the 9th Bhopals, 21st Company Sappers and Miners, two companies of the 47th Sikhs, 20th Company Sappers and Miners, all under General McCracken, and the Royal

Fusiliers and the Lincolnshire (under General Shaw), who joined on to the refused right flank of the Northumberland Fusiliers.

Elsewhere on the II. Corps front, except for heavy shelling, the 27th passed for the most part in comparative quiet; but the condition of the corps, owing to the heavy losses and the fatigue of every battalion of both divisions, was even more serious than before. And there was little prospect of relief.

North of the II. Corps proper, the Jullundur Brigade had also been heavily pressed. An organized attack was made on it from 3.30 A.M. to 5 A.M., but was broken up with the help of the French artillery and the XVIII. Brigade R.F.A. At 9 A.M. another equally unsuccessful one followed. By arrangement with General Conneau, four companies of chasseurs à pied and three dismounted squadrons were placed at the disposal of the brigade commander, Major-General Carnegie, and held in reserve; but it was not found necessary to employ them.

No German accounts of the fighting on the 27th October at Neuve Chapelle have come to notice, and it does not figure in the official list of battles and engagements, though far less serious ones are included.<sup>1</sup> From the examination of prisoners it was established that eight different regiments, or twenty-four battalions, were on the 3rd Division front. They belonged to the VII., XIII. and XIV. Corps, and the whole of the 14th Division of the VII. Corps had been hurled in four regimental columns against the attenuated battalions at Neuve Chapelle.<sup>2</sup>

#### 28TH OCTOBER: FAILURE OF THE COUNTER-ATTACK ON NEUVE CHAPELLE

Map 19. G.H.Q. instructions for the 28th repeated those of  
Sketch 5. the 27th: that the line should be maintained and local

<sup>1</sup> "S. und G.", in which even the capture of small hamlets like Radinghem and Le Maisnil, to the north of Neuve Chapelle, are recorded as victories.

<sup>2</sup> The following information kindly supplied by the *Reichsarchiv*, Berlin, in reply to a question, confirms this:—

"The village of Neuve Chapelle itself was taken by *Infantry Regiment 16 (14th Division)* supported or mixed up with parts of *Infantry Regiments 56, 57 (14th Division), 142 (29th Division)*."

In the fighting at Neuve Chapelle in the wider sense of the term, the whole of the troops of the 14th *Infantry Division (Infantry Regiments 16, 56, 57, 158, Field Artillery Regiments 7 and 43)* took part, strengthened by *Jäger Battalion 11*, parts of *Infantry Regiments 53 and 142*, the *1. Battalion of Foot Artillery Regiment No. 7* (heavy field howitzers) and the *II. Battalion of Bavarian Reserve Foot Artillery Regiment No. 3* (mortars).



offensives carried out.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the day, the 28 Oct. Commander-in-Chief met Generals Smith-Dorrien and Willcocks at Merville and discussed arrangements for relieving the II. by the Indian Corps. He was very decided that the troops of the former corps should have a rest, so as to be fresh in a few days to act as a reserve under his orders.

The operation orders for the 28th, issued by General Smith-Dorrien at 11 P.M. on the previous night, directed that, whilst other troops remained on the defensive, the 3rd Division (Major-General Colin Mackenzie) should deal by counter-attack with the Germans at Neuve Chapelle, as they were threatening both the 3rd and 5th Divisions. Every other available man was to be employed, under the Chief Engineer of the corps, Major-General Sandbach, in preparing a second line of defence. General Smith-Dorrien himself proceeded to 3rd Division headquarters on the evening of the 27th, where he remained until 2 A.M. on the 28th when divisional warning orders for the counter-attack were issued. From this time onwards many communications with regard to the preliminaries passed between 3rd Divisional headquarters and Br.-General McCracken (7th Brigade). The Indian troops west of Neuve Chapelle were placed at his disposal; the 14th Brigade on his right was ordered to assist him; and the 2nd Cavalry Brigade (then at Richebourg St. Vaast), which could provide 400 rifles, was warned to be prepared to follow the right of the attack. On the left, the North Staffordshire, lent by the 6th Division,<sup>2</sup> the French chasseurs and cyclists of Conneau's corps, and the Royal Scots—all under Br.-General Shaw of the 9th Brigade—were also detailed to support the attack. General McCracken particularly asked that the Lincolnshire and Royal Fusiliers on his immediate left should also attack in conjunction with his force, but it was found that these battalions were too exhausted by the previous day's fighting to co-operate, except by fire, and the men hard to keep awake even when engaged in firing.

Fog and mist prevented an early advance, and it was not until 11 A.M. that a short general bombardment of the position to be attacked was begun by four British and nine French batteries. At 11.15 A.M. the artillery lengthened five hundred yards and the infantry should

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 36.

<sup>2</sup> They were sent back by II. Corps without taking any part.



have moved forward ; but, although three officers of the 3rd Divisional Staff were employed specially to assist in ensuring co-operation between the units of the three different nationalities involved, no properly combined movement resulted. Practically only four companies definitely took part in the counter-attack. Partly owing to exhaustion, and partly owing to the enemy's activity, the troops on either side of General McCracken's force were not able to render the support and assistance expected from them.

The attack of the four companies—two of the 47th Sikhs, with the 20th and 21st Companies of the Sappers and Miners on either side of them—was carried out with the greatest gallantry. Their right was to have been protected by the Bhopal Regiment, but as this unit advanced it came under very heavy fire and halted, and continued the action by fire from a trench that it had reached. The Sikhs and Sappers went on.

Covering the seven hundred yards of open ground between them and Neuve Chapelle by rushes alternating with fire, as if on a training ground, the four companies reached the ruins of the village, and drove out the Germans—reported by prisoners to be three battalions—by close hand-to-hand fighting. They even penetrated to the eastern and northern borders. Here they were met by heavy shell and machine-gun fire, and counter-attack after counter-attack was launched against them. Major S. R. Davidson, commanding the 47th Sikhs, finding that he was unsupported except by the Sappers and Miners, that the enemy was increasing in strength and his own force diminishing by casualties, eventually ordered a retreat. This had to be carried out under enemy fire, and so heavy were the losses that of his own men he rallied only 68 out of 289, whilst of the Sappers and Miners all the officers were killed or wounded, and over a third of the other ranks of each company. The effect of the attack of the Sikhs and Sappers was not to be known until next morning.<sup>1</sup> The Bhopal Regiment also went back to its starting point

<sup>1</sup> The use of the engineer companies as "storm troops" in a situation that was not desperate was a mistake. It crippled the Lahore Division for a considerable period, and was criticized by officers of the Indian Army, and ascribed to ignorance of the Indian organization. But elsewhere in 1914 engineer troops were employed without a due sense of their technical value, and it became necessary for Sir John French to issue a memorandum calling attention to the misuse and waste of highly skilled specialists in work that should be performed by infantry.

—having lost many officers—exposing in its retreat two 28 Oct. reserve companies of the Royal West Kent next on the right, which had formed up at right angles to the line to form a flank and deal with any German break-through. The companies were overrun and for the time being dispersed, but the enemy did not pursue very far.

The 2nd Cavalry Brigade had been moved up in the early morning from Richebourg St. Vaast towards Neuve Chapelle. When the Indian troops attacked, General Mullens put the 18th Hussars and 4th Dragoon Guards into the trenches they had vacated, with orders not to advance further. Well supported by the XLII. Brigade R.F.A., the cavalry, with the two front line companies of the West Kents, was able to cover the retreat of the Sikhs and Sappers, but was then hard pressed itself. The 9th Lancers, the remaining regiment of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, were then sent into the firing line and helped to prevent the pursuing Germans from penetrating the large gap between the right of the brigade and the West Kents. This battalion and the three cavalry regiments held their line against great odds until after 2 P.M. when the Cheshire, barely three hundred bayonets, came up on the right of the cavalry and partially closed the gap.

On the left of the Sikhs and Sappers the French chasseurs had advanced, but the country they had to cross was more difficult, and their progress was slower than that of the Indians: so they, and the Royal Scots who were in echelon behind their left, did not arrive in time to give a fresh impulse to the counter-attack when it was beginning to waver. Their advance was stopped as soon as the news of the result of the Indian attack arrived, and the Royal Scots were directed to reoccupy the trenches held during the previous night west of Neuve Chapelle.

North of Neuve Chapelle the remnants of the 9th Brigade were subjected to heavy shelling and incessant sniping all day, and could do little to improve the general situation.

South of Neuve Chapelle, about 1 P.M., the Germans, after five hours' bombardment, extended their attack to include the K.O.Y.L.I. (13th Brigade), who stood on the right of the West Kents and then to the East Surreys on the right again; they at the same time continued to press the 2nd Cavalry Brigade and the infantry co-operating with it. About 5 P.M. they made a supreme effort on the whole of this front. It was pushed with such determina-

tion that parties came within one hundred yards of the East Surrey trenches. But the 1/Bedfordshire arrived in support of the West Kents, and the wearied remnants of the Wiltshire and South Lancashire were brought forward to strengthen the cavalry line. The turning point had come, and soon the enemy efforts began to die down. The last flicker was an assault about 9 P.M. against the 3/Worcestershire still further south. Once more the British troops had shown a superiority over the enemy in fortitude and endurance through all the varying phases of a battle, and once more their fire discipline had, in his eyes, multiplied the small force opposing him into immense superiority of numbers.

At midnight the 2/Royal Scots relieved the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, which had obtained hardly an hour's rest since it left Messines on the morning of the 27th. On the Scots' right were in succession the 1/Bedfordshire, 1/Cheshire, the remnants of the 1/R. West Kent—which was left with only two officers, lieutenants, one newly gazetted, and between 300 and 400 men—and the 2/K.O.Y.L.I. Except that the line near the junction between the West Kents and the troops on the left was withdrawn so as to flatten a salient opposite the Bois du Biez, the front was unchanged from that of the previous night.

#### 29TH OCTOBER. THE GERMAN FINAL EFFORT TO BREAK THROUGH THE II. CORPS

Soon after 3 A.M. on the 29th October <sup>1</sup> a British patrol entered Neuve Chapelle, and reported it had been evacuated by the enemy. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Germans was by no means quenched, and they continued their characteristic probing for a weak spot. Thus the day was one of heavy shelling and heavy fighting, of continuous but not simultaneous battle on the whole corps front. The first attack fell on the junction of the 13th and 14th Brigades, near La Cinque Rue, north-east of Festubert. Here the enemy found the 1/Devonshire, which at 4 A.M., after two days' rest, had taken over from the 1/Manchester (lent to the 15th by the Jullundur Brigade), and the 3/Worcestershire. In spite of the advantage conferred by the morning mist, the attackers were hurled back with crushing loss, to which the artillery greatly contributed.

<sup>1</sup> On this day Major-General F. D. V. Wing took over command of the 3rd Division in place of Major-General C. Mackenzie, invalided.



They then tried the mettle of the 2/Manchester, north of the Devons, and for a time were actually in possession of the trenches of one company.<sup>1</sup> At noon, encouraged perhaps by the sight of French shells dropping short into our trenches, the Germans risked an attempt against the K.O.Y.L.I.; but the Yorkshiremen drove them back, punishing them severely. Definite assaults then ceased until dark when, creeping into the ruins of Neuve Chapelle, the Germans made three advances in great force against the Royal Scots, who, by no means lulled into false security by the information that the village was evacuated and their front clear, were completely ready for them.

Further north, the 59th Rifles of the Jullundur Brigade and 34th Sikh Pioneers were assailed as usual in the early hours of the morning by a succession of attacks. These, however, were to a great extent dealt with by artillery fire alone.

30TH OCTOBER TO 2ND NOVEMBER. RELIEF OF THE II.  
BY THE INDIAN CORPS AND END OF THE BATTLE OF  
LA BASSÉE

By this time the whole of the Indian Corps, except the Sirhind Brigade, which was still in Egypt, had reached the front. On the night of the 29th/30th it began to relieve some of the worn and weary battalions of the II. Corps, and the trenches of the 7th and 9th Brigades opposite Neuve Chapelle were taken over by the Dehra Dun Brigade of the Meerut Division. On the following night the Garhwal and Bareilly Brigades relieved part of the 15th and 14th Brigades near Givenchy and Festubert. The relief was no easy matter, as there were no communication trenches and the troops had to crawl up water-courses; the change of one battalion for another took on the average two hours and a half, and it was not safe to relieve more than alternate battalions at one time. Thus the complete operation extended over two nights. During the 30th, the 2/8th Gurkhas was turned out of its trenches on the left of the Devons, who were in great straits until the Bedfordshire and 58th Rifles retook the lost sector. At 10 A.M. on the 31st, General Sir James Willcocks, commanding the Indian Corps, took over command of the line

<sup>1</sup> 2/Lieut. J. Leach and Sergeant J. Hogan of the 2/Manchester received the V.C. for services in expelling the enemy and taking prisoners of the 53rd Regiment (14th Division).



from Givenchy to Fauquissart from General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien. The latter left him, to assist the Indian Corps, ten and a half battalions, the greater part—all but three 18-pdr. brigades—of the artillery, and one field company R.E., of the II. Corps.

But, although they had been promised ten days' rest, there was no repose for the remainder of General Smith-Dorrien's troops. On the 30th, the Lincolnshire and the Northumberland Fusiliers, under General Shaw, started by march route for Wytschaete to support the Cavalry Corps. The 2/K.O.Y.L.I. and the 2/K.O.S.B. were despatched in motor buses to join him, and when they reported to him at Kemmel, he sent them on to the 1st Cavalry Division at Messines. On the morning of the 1st November the 3/Worcestershire and the 1/Dorsetshire were despatched to Neuve Eglise, and later in the day the remaining seven and a half battalions, all very weak in numbers, were ordered to the east of Bailleul in support of the III. Corps.

The artillery brigades of the 5th Division, which had been relieved, had one night only in billets before they were hurried via Bailleul and Neuve Eglise to Wulverghem, to go into action on the 2nd November in support of the Cavalry Corps. The three field companies R.E. remaining were also sent north to work on defences.

During the October fighting the II. Corps had nearly fourteen thousand casualties. Between the 12th and 31st, the 3rd Division lost 219 officers and 5,616 other ranks. Of its infantry brigades, the 7th was reduced to under nineteen hundred men, less than half; the 8th and 9th together totalled little over the establishment of one brigade. Opposed to its twelve battalions from the 13th to 31st October there had been identified over thirteen enemy infantry regiments (of 3 battalions), four *Jäger* battalions and twenty-seven regiments of cavalry. The 5th Division was practically in the same condition as the 3rd; it numbered slightly over seven thousand six hundred infantry, but eight hundred of these had joined it as reinforcements only on the 25th October. Indeed, of the 14,000 infantry—out of an establishment of 24,000—mustered by the II. Corps on the 31st October, nearly 1,400 had not been with their battalions a week. These figures should be borne in mind in considering the fighting through which these troops had passed, and the further combats into which they were to be thrust within a few

days, without rest and without further reinforcement, but, 2 Nov. as was recorded at the time by their commander, with their fighting spirit ever improving.

The casualties of the Indian Corps in its few days' fighting up to the 31st had been 35 British and 19 Indian officers and 1,511 other ranks.

The Battle of La Bassée, which began on the 10th October, ends officially on the 2nd November, although the Germans ceased serious effort after the 29th October. It remains to complete the narrative of the last three days. During this period the eight-mile front of the Indian Corps was subjected to constant bombardment by heavy artillery, interspersed with local and spasmodic infantry attacks, without, as a rule, any attempt to press them home. The enemy seemed to prefer to gain ground slowly by sapping. On the 2nd November, however, a more serious effort was developed against the much tried portion of the line north-west of Neuve Chapelle. There the 2/2 Gurkhas of the Dehra Dun Brigade was driven out of its trenches, and the line bent back slightly. Though a local counter-attack by various small detachments led by Lieut.-Colonel C. E. de M. Norie recovered some of the ground, it was not until the 5th November, when the 4/Middlesex and 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers of the 3rd Division—lent to the Indian Corps—were employed, that all was retaken. The Gurkha trenches were then filled in and abandoned. The Indian troops in this fighting lost heavily, for they stuck to their trenches under heavy bombardment, instead of temporarily leaving them and lying in rear, as more experienced units had learnt to do.

#### NOTE

##### THE GERMANS AT THE BATTLE OF LA BASSÉE<sup>1</sup>

The intention of the German High Command to break through on the Arras—La Bassée—Armentières front with the *Sixth Army* has been fully admitted; “but although [during October] fresh reinforcements had been sent up to that part of the front by the General Staff a break-through had not been possible”. The offensive was continued until the 29th October.

On the 27th October General von Falkenhayn, Chief of the General Staff, arrived at the headquarters of the *Sixth Army* to issue orders for the general attack which began on the 29th south-east of Ypres, known now as the battle of Gheluvelt. For this “all available heavy artillery of the *Sixth Army*” was sent up, and later all

<sup>1</sup> See “Ypres”, pp. 59-61 and 92.

the ammunition. The attacks further south were to be partially discontinued. In consequence Crown Prince Rupprecht ordered the right wing and centre of the *Sixth Army* opposite the II. and III. Corps to continue making holding attacks, whilst the left opposite the French kept as quiet as possible. Thus serious operations on the II. Corps front came to an end just at the time that it was relieved by the Indian Corps.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OPERATIONS OF THE III. CORPS AND THE CAVALRY CORPS AT THE END OF OCTOBER 1914

#### THE BATTLES OF ARMENTIÈRES AND MESSINES

(Maps 13, 16, 17, 18, 28 ; Sketches 5, 7, 8)

#### OPERATIONS OF THE III. CORPS

##### THE BATTLE OF ARMENTIÈRES (*concluded*) 22ND OCTOBER—2ND NOVEMBER 1914

On the evening of the 21st/22nd, the III. Corps, with the 19th Brigade attached, was holding a line between the French and British cavalry, nearly twelve miles long, covering Armentières, from Rouges Banes (5 miles S.S.W. of Armentières) via Touquet—La Houssoie—Epinette—Houplines—Le Gheer—St. Yves to the Douve.<sup>1</sup> Opposed to it were the greater part of the German *XIII. Corps*,<sup>2</sup> with the *48th Reserve Division* of the *XXIV. Reserve Corps* behind it,<sup>3</sup> the *XIX. Corps* and the *I. Cavalry Corps*. Though the 4th Division on the left had held its own, and more, the 6th Division had been forced to withdraw from Ennetières and Prêmesques, and the 19th Brigade had been driven back from Le Maisnil. In spite too of the already abnormally extended line of the 4th Division, it had been necessary to detach two infantry companies and a section of a field company R.E. from it to assist the Cavalry Corps to hold Messines. Map 13.  
Sketch 5.

For General Pulteney, the commander of the III. Corps, these were days of more than usual anxiety. He was

<sup>1</sup> For the last three places see Map 14. The infantry brigades, from right to left, were 19th, 16th, 18th, 17th, 12th, 10th and 11th. There was one battery with the 19th Brigade.

<sup>2</sup> The front of the *20th Division* of this corps at this date seems to have covered the 19th and Jullundur Brigades.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 229.



opposed by an enemy force more than double his own, of which one corps, the *XIII.*, was apparently working southwards, as "shock troops", searching for a weak spot. On the 18th October it had been near Menin opposite the 7th Division; on the 20th it had attacked at Ennetières and La Vallée against the centre of the 6th Division; on the 21st it appeared at Radinghem opposite its right, and at Le Maisnil, opposite the 19th Brigade. There seemed every prospect that its next effort would be against Conneau's cavalry filling the gap between the II. and III. Corps. This, indeed, proved to be the case; for late in the afternoon of the 23rd—in preparation, no doubt, for the general attack of the *Sixth Army* on the II. and III. Corps from the La Bassée Canal to Frélinghien on the 24th—it drove the French cavalrymen out of Fromelles, to which place they had retired when the II. Corps swung back. Thus the right flank of the III. Corps was seriously endangered. The situation, as already narrated, was saved by the arrival on the 24th of the Jullundur Brigade, which took over the line hitherto held by General Conneau's troopers, who then became available as a reserve.

Sir John French's orders to the III. Corps, which, like those to the II. Corps, were to entrench and hold on,<sup>1</sup> were easy enough for the 4th Division to carry out; the enemy, after his set-back at Le Gheer on 20th/21st, left the division in comparative peace for some days. This peace did not include the cessation of shelling and sniping, with its daily toll of life, but it enabled the defences to be improved, mainly of course during the hours of darkness. The brewery and some houses at Frélinghien, which had only been occupied with a view to further advance, were abandoned by divisional orders, but otherwise the line remained intact.

The Germans made a number of attacks on the III. Corps, which from their complete failure are recorded as minor affairs; the only one of note was another specially sharp attack at Le Gheer on the 29th, the first day of the great German offensive, when, as will be narrated later on, the Gheluvelt cross roads were lost;<sup>2</sup> but one and all were repulsed. The 4th Division was left with the impression that by straight shooting over the parapet, backed up by crossfire of artillery and flanking fire of machine guns, it could stop a German attack of almost any weight. The action of

<sup>1</sup> Appendices 33 to 36.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter X.

the divisional artillery, under Br.-General G. F. Milne, <sup>22-24</sup> was extraordinarily effective, and arrangements were made <sup>Oct.</sup> by which it was possible to switch nearly the whole of it on to any sector that was menaced, except that near Le Gheer, where the high trees of Ploegsteert Wood gave protection to the enemy. The guns were kept under divisional control, but the infantry brigades had a call on particular batteries in case of need. The field artillery brigade on Hill 63<sup>1</sup> gave effective aid also to the Cavalry Corps on the left of the 4th Division, as will be noticed from time to time.

The 6th Division (to which the 19th Brigade had returned on the 21st), whose experience of the war was shorter, did not fare so well, and owing to the heavy attacks on it, and the various retirements, its defences were not in such good condition as those of its sister division; nor were its facilities for artillery observation so good. Frequent assaults were made against it on the 22nd and 23rd, particularly its right centre, where the 16th Brigade, facing almost south, held the right face of a salient, the apex of which was at Le Quesne (3 miles S.S.E. of Armentières). But the brigade stuck to its position and inflicted heavy loss on the enemy.<sup>2</sup> An attack at dawn on the 23rd was bold in the extreme. In the morning mist—and now every morning in Flanders was misty—German officers and men, though beaten off by the 1/Buffs and 1/Leicestershire, reached the parapet of the 1/Shropshire L.I. and the 2/York and Lancaster; most of them were bayoneted on it, but a few actually jumped into the British trenches, and, after hand-to-hand fighting, were killed there.

In view of the attacks on the 6th Division, the 10th Brigade of the 4th Division took over the front of the 12th Brigade, that is as far as Chapelle d'Armentières, as well as its own, and the 12th was assembled in reserve at the junction of the two divisions. On the 24th this brigade relieved the 17th Brigade, taking over the 6th Division trenches as far as Rue du Bois, so that the 4th Division now had a front of over eight miles.

At dawn on the 24th October—the day of the loss and recapture of Polygon Wood further north—the German

<sup>1</sup> One of the four brigades was always out of the line for rest, so the particular brigade varied. The heavy battery was near Le Bizet (1 mile north of Armentières).

<sup>2</sup> Private H. May, 1/Scottish Rifles (10th Brigade), received the V.C. for rescuing wounded under heavy fire near La Boutillerie on the 22nd.

*Sixth Army* made another attempt at a general attack on the whole front from the La Bassée Canal to the Lys. Its failure against the II. Corps has been already related. It was everywhere repelled in the III. Corps, except on the front of the 16th Brigade, which, as it faced south, was specially exposed to enfilade. After a few lucky shots had wiped out some of the trenches, German infantry from the cover of factory buildings penetrated for a time into the line of the 1/Leicestershire, which lost 225 men before the gap was closed. Fighting continued all day and into the night, and at 11 P.M. there was a consultation between Generals Ingouville-Williams and Congreve, commanding the 16th and 18th Brigades. They decided to withdraw the 16th Brigade to the line Touquet—Flamengrie Farm—Rue du Bois, about five hundred yards in rear, which had been prepared, with divisional approval, for occupation should the Germans again attack. Early in the morning of the 25th the enemy did again make desperate efforts to break in, especially against the Leicestershire. The retirement was therefore ordered. Although in close touch with the enemy, the 16th Brigade on the night of the 25th/26th withdrew in heavy rain and pitchy darkness to its new line without interference, and the right of the 18th conformed. The casualties in the 16th Brigade in the four days' fighting (21st-24th) were 28 officers and 557 other ranks.

25-27  
Oct.

On the 25th and 26th October, when the main effort of the *Sixth Army* was against Neuve Chapelle, both divisions of the III. Corps were heavily shelled and sniped all day, but no infantry attack was made on them.<sup>1</sup>

On the 27th, after heavy bombardment, there was much rifle fire and the 18th and 16th Brigades in particular were attacked, but repulsed the enemy with heavy loss. Some hostile infantry got within fifty yards of the 1/East Yorkshire of the 18th Brigade near Rue du Bois, and a hundred dead were subsequently counted in front of its trenches, whilst in front of one trench of the 2/Durham L.I. there were 56 dead.

<sup>1</sup> The following memorandum was issued by the III. Corps on the 26th :

"The enemy has for the time being abandoned his infantry attacks and has resorted to a heavy bombardment of our trenches. Till the corps is in a position to resume the offensive, the reply to this method of attack will be as follows :—

"Deepen trenches ; make communication trenches ; withdraw as many men as possible from the front line ; collect as strong a divisional reserve as possible ; improve facilities for artillery observation."



The enemy appeared, however, to be making preparations for a greater effort. This was launched next morning, the 28th, again after heavy bombardment, and struck in particular against the Durham Light Infantry (18th Brigade) in a salient south-east of Rue du Bois and east of the La Bassée-Armentières railway. Creeping up through the ruins of cottages, portions of two German regiments reached the Durham trenches and forced out the defenders, some men actually getting in rear of the British line. The invaders were expelled by a counter-attack of the reserve companies of the East Yorkshire, D.L.I. and Lancashire Fusiliers (the last from the 4th Division), and nearly two hundred of them were buried by the 18th Brigade. The dead and the prisoners belonged not only to the *XIII. Corps*, but to the *107th* and *179th Regiments* of the *24th Division* of the *XIX. Corps*, which would seem to have been brought south for the attack.<sup>1</sup>

28-30  
Oct.

The 28th October was fairly quiet, but on the 29th at 2 A.M. the enemy developed a heavy attack against the 19th Brigade south of La Boutillerie. It was beaten off except at one place where he actually entered a portion of the 1/Middlesex trenches and held it for some hours until—with the assistance of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders from brigade reserve—it was recovered, all the enemy in it being bayoneted or captured. Over two hundred dead were counted and forty prisoners taken. They belonged to a new formation, the *48th Reserve Division* of the *XXIV. Reserve Corps*,<sup>2</sup> which had come into line between the *XIX.* and *XIII. Corps*, the left flank of the latter extending down to Neuve Chapelle.

The situation of the III. Corps, opposed by between four and five divisions seeking, fortunately in vain, for a weak place, was perilous enough: but the desperate endeavours of the Germans to gain a victory and to break through near Ypres now began to have their repercussion further south. At 5.15 P.M. on the 30th October orders were received from Sir John French that all available reserves of the 4th Division were to be north of the Lys by daylight next day, prepared to assist the Cavalry Corps; and that the 6th Division should so distribute its reserves

<sup>1</sup> The *24th Division* was in line opposite Armentières.

<sup>2</sup> Prisoners of *Infantry Regiments* 223 and 224 were taken. The *XXIV. Reserve Corps* left the *47th Reserve Division* in the Woevre, its place in the corps being taken by the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*.



that they would be in a position to assist the portion of the 4th Division south of the river. As it happened, the enemy, whilst engaging the whole front of the 4th Division north of the Lys, in the offensive of the *Fourth Army* against Ypres, made no serious attempt after this date against the front of the division south of the river. Reserves could therefore be massed on its left with safety. Only two battalions, the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers and the 2/Lancashire Fusiliers, both of the 12th Brigade, could be spared for emergencies in the north; this left nothing but small local reserves of a company or a platoon on the eight-mile front of the 4th Division.

About the very hour that the 4th Division was thus called on to assemble its reserves in the north, the enemy, after bombardment from dawn onwards, attacked the 1/Hampshire of the 11th Brigade. As the front was 2,000 yards long—Le Gheer to the Douve—Major Parker had practically every man in the trenches, and these, as was then normal, were not continuous, but isolated lengths, without communication trenches either to flank or rear. For ten minutes the Germans were actually in the left centre trench of the Hampshire, but they were expelled before they could settle down by a brilliant counter-attack of the brigade reserve, of which Br.-General Hunter-Weston's report was, "Major Prowse<sup>1</sup> and the 1/Somerset L.I., God bless them, have restored the situation"; but the whole platoon in the trench entered were found dead at their posts. The prisoners taken belonged to the *134th Regiment, 40th Division, XIX. Corps*. When another attack was made on the Hampshire next day—the day of the loss and recapture of Gheluvelt—the enemy again reached the British trenches, but hastily retired, and the line was reoccupied without the necessity of a counter-attack. Notwithstanding these attacks, which formed part of the great German general offensive against Ypres, it was arranged that the 2/Inniskillings of the 12th Brigade should take over the right of the Cavalry Corps line. Thus the 4th Division held right up to Messines, and even had troops participating in the defence of the village, its brigade and divisional reserves being entirely absorbed.

To close the general narrative of the III. Corps up to the official date of the end of the Battle of Armentières

<sup>1</sup> Killed as brigadier-general commanding the 11th Brigade, at the Battles of the Somme, 1916.

requires only a few words.<sup>1</sup> South of the Lys, November 1 Nov. passed in active trench warfare. As shelling, sniping and petty attacks continued for the rest of the month, although the enemy ceased any offensive in force, there was little in the soldiers' eyes to mark the termination of the battle.

On the 1st November the retirement of Allenby's cavalry corps from Messines made the position of the III. Corps very critical, apart from the fact that it was holding over twelve miles of front with weakened battalions and without any reserves worth mentioning. General Pulteney reported to G.H.Q. that the line was so extended and the men so exhausted that he doubted whether a serious attack could be stopped. Sir John French sent him from the II. Corps the 3/Worcestershire and 1/Dorsetshire, which came to Wulverghem as reserve to the 4th Division,<sup>2</sup> and he warned the III. Corps to be prepared to retire to the line Fleurbaix—Nieppe—Neuve Église.<sup>3</sup> But he doubled the daily dole of gun ammunition, which for some days had been forty rounds per 18-pdr. and twenty per 4·5-inch howitzer. The straight shooting of the infantry of the 4th and 6th Divisions did the rest.

Between the 15th and 31st October the III. Corps had lost 207 officers and 5,572 other ranks, of whom 82 and 1,987 belonged to the 4th Division, and practically all the rest to the 6th Division.

## OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY CORPS

### THE BATTLE OF MESSINES (*concluded*) 22ND-24TH OCTOBER 1914

In accordance with G.H.Q. orders issued on the evening of the 21st for the Cavalry Corps to hold the line between the III. and IV. Corps at all costs, General Allenby ordered the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions to entrench and prepare their front against attack to the utmost of their means. Map 16.  
Sketch 7.

The situation on the morning of the 23rd was as follows :—

<sup>1</sup> Officially the Battle of Armentières ends on the 2nd November, and its northern limit is the Douve ; but heavy attacks on the 4th Division between the Lys and the Douve continued after that date. They belong both strategically and tactically to the Battles of Ypres, and will be dealt with in later chapters.

<sup>2</sup> See Map 29, where these battalions are shown at night at Neuve Eglise and Ploegsteert.

<sup>3</sup> Sketches 5 (for Fleurbaix) & 4 (for Neuve Eglise).

1st Cavalry Division (General de Lisle)

1st Cavalry Brigade . One regiment from north of Douve to Messines, one regiment, with two companies of the 2/Essex and section of a field company (from 4th Division) in Messines. One regiment in reserve.

2nd Cavalry Brigade . In reserve.

2nd Cavalry Division (General H. Gough) :

From Messines to Hollebeke, with its front divided between the 4th, 5th and 3rd Cavalry Brigades.

22-23  
Oct.  
Map 17.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the 22nd and 23rd October the Ferozepore Brigade of the Lahore Division arrived to support the Cavalry Corps, the 1/Connaught Rangers and the 57th Wilde's Rifles coming up in buses. The latter battalion on the evening of the 22nd was sent into the trenches to assist the 5th Cavalry Brigade. Early on the morning of the 23rd the 129th Baluchis relieved the 3rd Cavalry Brigade; and later in the day the 9th Bhopal Infantry, the last battalion of the brigade, arrived, and was placed in reserve. On the 24th the 3rd Cavalry Division was transferred from the IV. Corps and came under the orders of the Cavalry Corps next day.

There is little to narrate of the fighting, except that attacks were made by the enemy at intervals throughout the day and night. Thus, on the 23rd they are recorded as taking place at 6 A.M., 7.45 A.M., 4 P.M., 8 P.M., 9.20 P.M. and midnight, followed by another at 3 A.M. next morning. One and all of these attacks were repulsed, but the continual strain on the defending troops was never relaxed and there were many casualties: on the 22nd Lt.-Colonel E. B. Cook, commanding the Composite Regiment of Household Cavalry, received wounds of which he subsequently died. In view of the German numerical superiority both in men and guns, no counter-offensive was possible. The 2nd Cavalry Division diary records that its eighteen guns fired so often that the recoil springs of four of them were broken. The enemy attacks were carried out mainly by the methodical advance of small parties. The German strength enabled many to be made, for six cavalry divisions, supported by four *Jäger* and two

<sup>1</sup> On Map 17 in "Notes", 3rd line, for "17th Division" read "French 17th Division".

cyclist battalions, were opposite General Allenby's force of two cavalry divisions and an Indian infantry brigade.<sup>1</sup> 24 Oct.

The German explanation of the failure to overwhelm the Cavalry Corps is that the British positions were too strong; that, as with the British, ammunition was beginning to fail; and that further attack on Messines without heavy artillery was hopeless. The armament and equipment of the German cavalry was, it is admitted, unsuitable for anything but mounted action. Incidentally it is stated that the British rifle and machine-gun fire was so accurate that it was impossible to get within a thousand yards of the position.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The German cavalry was reorganized on the 22nd, under General von der Marwitz, as follows:—

<i>V. Cavalry Corps</i>	.	.	<i>3rd, 7th and Bavarian Cavalry Divisions</i> and Petersen's three <i>Jäger</i> battalions. Of these, the <i>3rd</i> and <i>7th Cavalry Divisions</i> were engaged north of the Canal against the <i>IV. Corps</i> .
<i>IV. Cavalry Corps</i>	.	.	<i>6th and 9th Cavalry Divisions</i> .
<i>I. Cavalry Corps</i>	.	.	<i>Guard and 4th Cavalry Divisions</i> , and the <i>Guard-Jäger battalion</i> .
Reserve	.	.	<i>2nd Cavalry Division</i> and 2 cyclist battalions. On the 24th October the <i>2nd Cavalry Division</i> relieved the <i>Bavarian</i> , and the latter withdrew to Wervicq. (Poseck, p. 194.)

<sup>2</sup> The operations of the Cavalry Corps in the days following the 24th October, though officially included in the Battle of Messines, belong essentially to the fighting for Ypres, and will therefore be related day by day in conjunction with those of the *I.* and *IV. Corps*.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES (*continued*)

#### ATTEMPTED RENEWAL OF THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE 25TH-28TH OCTOBER 1914

(Maps 1, 2, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23; Sketches A, 5, 8, 9)

#### 25TH OCTOBER: A DAY OF FIGHTING, BUT OF LITTLE PROGRESS

#### ADVANCE OF THE FRENCH IX. CORPS AND BRITISH 2ND DIVISION

**Map 18.** **Sketch 8.** THE general situation near Ypres on the morning of the 25th October may be shortly summarized as follows:—<sup>1</sup> The Allied line of battle formed three sides of a rough oblong projecting on the eastern side of the town towards the enemy. Of this oblong, the British held the southern half: Hollebeke—Kruiseecke—Zonnebeke, with a sharp and very exposed salient at Kruiseecke, and the French occupied the northern half: Zonnebeke—Langemarck—Bixschoote, with a blunted salient at Langemarck. Southwards, the British line was continued by Allenby's cavalry corps to join with the III. Corps; whilst, northward of Steenstraat, the French line was carried on by French and Belgian troops along the Yser canal and Yser river towards the sea at Nieuport, where part of the French 42nd Division (Grossetti) was engaged.

The prospects of the Allies appeared excellent. Everywhere the great German attacks had been repulsed; some progress had been made by the French 17th Division attacking on the left of the British; there were still in reserve the whole of the British 1st Division, a brigade each of the 2nd and 7th Divisions, and the greater part

<sup>1</sup> See p. 202 for the distribution of troops.

of the French 18th Division; and all the German forces available near Ypres had apparently been employed. 25 Oct.

The initiative seemed to have passed to the Allies. Sir John French was very hopeful, and telegraphed to the Secretary of State for War on the evening of the 24th, that if things continued to go well the battle was "practically won". He had an interview with General d'Urbal at Poperinghe that afternoon, when arrangements for continuing the offensive were agreed on. As it turned out, the 25th October belied expectation: it was not a day of great events. Indeed, although artillery and rifle fire continued, constant German attacks took place, and Kruseecke salient was lost, the four days, 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th October, relatively speaking formed a pause in the long-drawn combat of the Battles of Ypres, 1914.

The orders for the 25th issued by General d'Urbal—Sketch 6. whose troops were, as on the previous day, to be the principal and directing factor in the attack—instructed the IX. Corps (Dubois), with two cavalry divisions attached, to continue "vigorously" its attack north-westwards via Passchendaele, towards Roulers. General de Mitry, who was occupying the old line of Haig's corps from Langemarck to the canal, and thence half-way to Dixmude, with the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions and 87th and 89th Territorial Divisions, was to maintain his position and do what was possible to clear his front.

Operation Order No. 40, issued from British General Headquarters at 10 P.M.,<sup>1</sup> after confirming a warning message sent at 7.45 P.M., directed the I., IV. and Cavalry Corps to advance, whilst the II. and III. Corps, with the Lahore Division (less a brigade lent to the Cavalry Corps), contained the enemy in front of them. But the forward movement of the Allies was not to be simultaneous:—each formation, corps or division, had to keep touch by the left. Thus the advance of the I. Corps was dependent on the progress of the French, that of the IV. Corps on the I., and so on. The operations will therefore be described from left to right. As will be seen, this "spear-head" method of attack, though many times attempted, brought no success. It gave the enemy the opportunity to concentrate his guns on the sector first threatened, precluded mutual assistance, and prevented advantage being taken of success on one part of a wide front to facilitate progress at other parts. Though it may have been suitable in other

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 33.

ways for an Allied force the different fighting values of whose contingents made a combined and simultaneous operation difficult, it ensured that if the "spear-head" failed the whole operation was abortive.

The day was fine and warm, in contrast to the mist and rain of the previous fortnight: and, besides this favourable augury, there was no difficulty about co-operation, as the headquarters of both General Dubois and Sir Douglas Haig were in Ypres.

Map 20.  
Sketch 8.

The progress of the French IX. Corps,<sup>1</sup> though determined, was slow. General Dubois was able to put into the fight five more battalions of the 18th Division, and two more of the 268th Reserve Regiment (corps troops), freed by the arrival of two Territorial battalions, who took their place in holding a line of trenches dug between the front and Ypres as insurance against a reverse. Thus he now had his whole corps in action. The resistance of the Germans increased, however, as the French advanced, and they made numerous counter-attacks, which not only stopped progress on the part of the French line where they took effect, but led to other parts holding back. The whole morning passed and still the IX. Corps had not got abreast of the British left. Towards 1.30 P.M. General Dubois felt compelled to issue an order to his troops to press on, pointing out that two regiments were not attacking, because each was waiting for the other. A little ground, however, was gained all along the French front.

The slow advance of the IX. Corps naturally reacted on the British. General Haig gave a rest to the 1st Division, for it had only that morning come out of the line, and ordered the 2nd Division—which had the 1/King's and 1/R. Berkshire of the 6th Brigade on the top of the ridge near Broodseinde and part of the 5th Brigade in front of Polygon Wood—to reconnoitre and be in readiness to attack in co-operation with the French at 11 A.M. Advantage was taken of the early morning hours to withdraw the troops of the 5th Brigade, which had become intermingled with those of the 7th Division on the previous day.<sup>2</sup> All but one company were recovered, and this rejoined during the night of the 25th/26th.

The hour of 11 A.M. passed without the French 18th Division coming up level with the left of the 6th Brigade near Broodseinde. Nevertheless, the 1/Royal Berkshire, which lay there, being in close contact with the Germans,

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 200.



had been making use of every opportunity to prepare by 25 Oct. fire the way for its attack. It made havoc of a German battery which was adventurously pushed up to within about half a mile of the front line near Broodseinde, and, although the enemy moved five of the six guns back a short distance by hand, he was unable to get them away, and they were captured later.

It was not until 1.50 P.M., when the right of the IX. Corps was just approaching the Berkshire, that an order to attack at 3 P.M. was sent by the I. Corps. The 4th Brigade, with the 2/Grenadiers and Irish Guards leading, passed through the 5th Brigade—which eventually went back into divisional reserve—and with the 6th Brigade on its left, advanced towards Becelaere. Each infantry brigade was supported by a brigade of artillery and a field company R.E. But, owing to the small amount of daylight remaining and to the enemy contesting every yard of ground, it was not possible to make much progress, far less carry out the order to envelop Reutel from the south.

By 7 P.M. the 4th Brigade, though the Grenadiers on the right were much galled by enfilade fire, had established its advanced troops in close contact with the enemy on the western slopes of the Reutel spur, the Irish Guards being only two hundred yards from the edge of the village. The troops of the 6th Brigade had got even further, and were across the Beeclaere—Passchendaele road: that is, over the top of the ridge, the R. Berkshire taking seventy prisoners of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, and one of the guns of the battery which they had put out of action in the morning, the French bringing off the other five. Very heavy rain came on at nightfall and, no further advance being feasible amidst wind and rain, all troops dug in, or rather scratched in, on the ground gained. As the line was not continuous, battalions took special precautions against attacks from flank and rear. One ingeniously bivouacked in a formation best described by the letter P, the lower stroke, formed by a double line of men back to back, extending six hundred yards rearwards to some reserve trenches.

The German account represents the fighting on this day as "heavy", and the situation between Reutel and Zonnebeke as critical.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It states that the British, "continuously reinforced by the arrivals of French units, endeavoured to break through and used all their "strength". To meet the attack of the French IX. Corps and British 2nd Division, the *XXVI. Reserve Corps* and *53rd Reserve Division* of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, which covered this front, were reinforced by the



The 7th Division—on the right of the 2nd—had, like the latter, two infantry brigades, the 20th and 21st, in line, and one, the 22nd, in reserve. Its front ran from the Kruiseecke salient, passing in front of Gheluvelt, to the junction with the 5th Brigade near Reutel. Its orders were, whilst holding on to Kruiseecke as a pivot, to swing forward its left as the attack of the 2nd Division progressed. In consequence of the late start of the French, as already narrated, the left of the 21st Brigade in the course of the afternoon advanced very little. The principal offensive movement, indeed, was made by some burying parties of the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers, who, being fired on from a house, attacked it, shovels in hand, and captured 20 Germans, including an officer.

The attack of the IX. Corps and the 2nd Division against the left of the German *Fourth Army* by no means secured a respite for the 20th Brigade at Kruiseecke, where it had evidently very considerable forces opposed to it. Early in the afternoon another determined attack was made on it at the Gheluvelt cross roads—where the Ypres—Menin road is crossed by the Kruiseecke—Becelaere road—by part of the German *54th Reserve Division*, which involved also the 2/Green Howards the right of the 21st Brigade. For some time the place where the right of this brigade stood on the Menin road formed, as it were, a deadpoint or pivot: the Allies north of it and the Germans south of it taking the offensive, and endeavouring to push on whilst their other wing stood fast. A reserve company of the 1/Grenadier Guards (20th Brigade) and two companies of the 2/Queen's (22nd Brigade) from the divisional reserve were sent to counter-attack south of the road, and they successfully took the pressure off the Green Howards and restored the situation north of the road.

A little later the 20th Brigade was attacked at another point, further south, at Kruiseecke. In view of the loss

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*37th and 38th Landwehr Brigades*, the *2nd Ersatz Brigade* (each of six battalions, etc.) and "detachments of the *Marine Division*"—that is practically the infantry of another two divisions, so that the numerical superiority of infantry in the German favour continued to be about two to one (five divisions to three) whilst the artillery preponderance, owing to the heavy batteries brought up, was even more marked. The German forces above enumerated do not include the *54th Reserve Division* and the *3rd Cavalry Division* with Petersen's *Jäger Brigade* (3 battalions) and Schulenberg's *11th Landwehr Brigade* (5 battalions), which attacked the 7th Division further south. "Ypres", pp. 54-57. Poseck, p. 195. The line of demarcation between the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* and the *3rd Cavalry Division* was the Ypres—Menin road.

of the tip of the salient next day, it is desirable to enter 25 Oct.  
into some details. The general line of the British, running a little east of south from near Reutel, passed on the east side of the small village of Kruiseecke—which stands on a distinct rise of ground about fifty feet above the general level—and then made a turn of less than a right-angle to the west round the village. It thus presented a weak salient, whose two faces could be and were enfiladed by artillery and machine guns both from the east and the south. The village itself consisted of little more than one street about three hundred yards long, running north to south on the top of the rise of ground, with a few outlying houses and enclosures on the eastern side. The British defences lay entirely on the forward slope exposed to enemy view. The 1/Grenadiers were north of the village, and held with two companies the first hundred yards of the defences on the eastern side; then came, going southward, a company and a platoon of the 2/Scots Guards, holding the salient angle, in six trenches with intervals of a hundred to two hundred yards between them; the 2/Border Regiment and 2/Gordon Highlanders held the rest of the southern face. There were no communication trenches between the sectors or to the rear, and no wire; and the ground was so pulverized by artillery fire that it was impossible to make any improvement in the trenches. About 8 P.M., under cover of heavy rain and darkness, the northernmost trench of the 2/Scots Guards, held by a platoon, was rushed by a party of Germans, subsequently found to have been about four or five hundred strong. This party then pushed down to the houses of the main street, actually behind the Scots Guards company which, however, still held on, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. When a little before midnight news of the break in the line was brought in by a survivor of the platoon, Br.-General Ruggles-Brise had available at brigade headquarters three companies of 2/Scots Guards; but two of them, one being only about forty-five strong, had just come in from Reutel, where they had been despatched on loan to the 2nd Division after the capture of the 2/Wiltshire on the 24th. Although it was almost pitch dark the General directed Major the Hon. H. Fraser, with the two strongest companies, to retake the trenches at all costs, for their loss meant a gap of over a quarter of a mile in the line. A first attempt to expel the enemy from the village failed and Major Fraser was killed; but a second, under Major

Viscount Dalrymple,<sup>1</sup> after an attack house by house from south to north and much close fighting, resulted in the capture of 5 officers and 189 men in a farm on the north edge.<sup>2</sup> By midnight the original line had been reoccupied. The company of the 2/Scots Guards which had held out in the line was relieved by the two which had made the counter-attack—after one of them had had a weary tramp with the prisoners to brigade headquarters and back again. It had been an exciting night, and a poor preparation, after so many other nights of wakefulness, for the heavy work that was to come.

Soon after the German attack happened, General Capper had placed the 1/South Staffordshire at the disposal of the 20th Brigade. When the battalion reported to him, General Ruggles-Brise, as a precaution, sent the 2/Border and 1/Grenadiers a company each. He later relieved two companies of the Border Regiment by two of the Staffordshire. In marching up the two first companies suffered considerably from rifle fire and, it may be added, captured some German stragglers lying concealed among the bushes, nineteen behind the Grenadiers and six behind the Border Regiment, although the usual measures had been taken by the brigade to secure its flank and rear.

As a result of parting with the South Staffordshire, General Capper had in hand in divisional reserve two weak battalions—the 2/Royal Warwickshire and the 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers—numbering barely a thousand effectives in all.

### THE CAVALRY CORPS

Map 20.  
Sketch 8.

For the 25th October there is little to record concerning the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions, which, with the Ferozepore Brigade attached, held the line on the right of the 7th Division from Zandvoorde southwards. There was only occasional shelling until late in the day, when Messines was violently bombarded, and later, about 11 P.M., unsuccessfully attacked. Otherwise the six German cavalry divisions opposed to the British three did nothing on this day.

<sup>1</sup> Now Earl of Stair.

<sup>2</sup> They mostly belonged to the *233rd Reserve Infantry Regiment* of the *51st Reserve Division, XXVI. Reserve Corps*, though this formation was supposed to be on the right of the *XXVI.* north of a dividing line near Zonnebeke. Others belonged to the *242nd Reserve Infantry Regiment, 53rd Reserve Division, XXVII. Reserve Corps.*

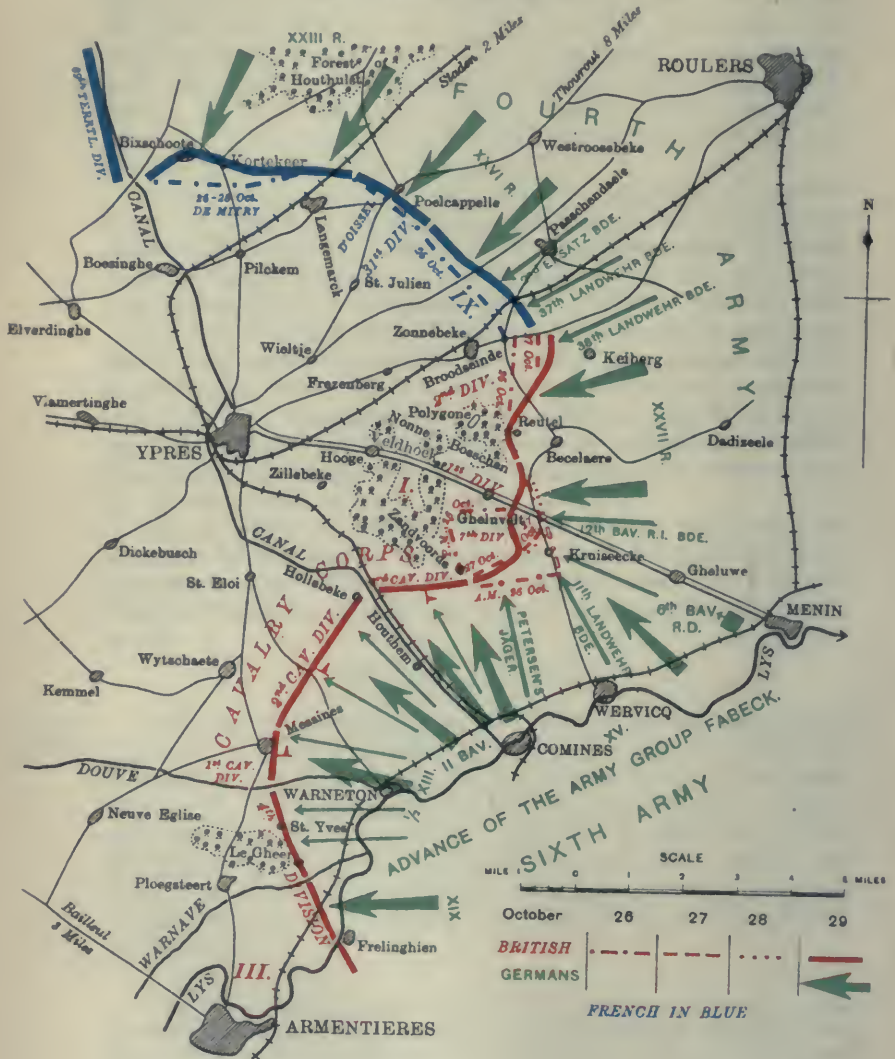




# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

SKETCH 9.

26<sup>TH</sup> - 29<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 1914.



## GENERAL SITUATION ON THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH 25 Oct.

The general situation near Ypres on the night of the 25th/26th, except for the small advance made by the French IX. Corps and the British formations near it, was the same as twenty-four hours earlier.

Elsewhere the 25th October had been a quiet day; it has been seen that it was uneventful in the II. and III. Corps.<sup>1</sup> On the Belgian front, too, there seemed to have been a distinct pause in the enemy's operations.<sup>2</sup> Here the violence of the bombardment abated and the few infantry attacks made were feebly conducted. The Germans claim to have passed the whole of the artillery of the *5th* and *6th Reserve Divisions* across the Yser on this day. They admit, however, the failure of the infantry attacks of these divisions which followed; and the ill success of an attempt of the *43rd Reserve Division* to storm Dixmude, after an artillery preparation which "included 16-inch howitzers".<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the losses of the Belgians had been so heavy since they had reached the Yser on the 15th October—apart from dead and missing, 9,145 wounded had been evacuated by rail, and there were over one thousand in local hospitals—that the headquarter staff began to consider preparations for retirement to the line of the Dixmude railway embankment, and took the preliminary measures for making an inundation in front of it. This obstacle could be created—after blocking certain arches and culverts in the embankment in order to prevent water spreading behind it—by allowing the sea to enter at the Nieupoort locks at high tide. A second line of defence was also begun on the Loo canal, 5 miles behind the railway.

At the close of the 25th October, Sir John French, taking an optimistic view of the reports from his commanders, telegraphed to London that the situation was growing more favourable every hour, and his anxiety was over, and that, though the casualties had been tremendous, the fighting was decreasing in intensity. He sent his Chief of the General Staff, Sir Archibald Murray, to London to report more fully. General Foch, whom he visited at Poperinghe, considered that the Belgian-French position on the Yser was also becoming much more satisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 210 and 228.

<sup>2</sup> "Belgian Military Operations", pp. 81-2.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", p. 47.

He promised to send the British commander French reinforcements, to the extent of another Regular corps, in the next two days. All appeared to be going well, and at 11.30 that night the Secretary of State for War telegraphed the thanks of the Government to the troops for their splendid courage and endurance. The only sinister signs were the air reconnaissance reports of considerable train movements, and the news that fresh troops were on the way to reinforce the German *Fourth Army*.

26TH OCTOBER : NO PROGRESS : LOSS OF THE  
KRUISEECKE SALIENT

THE FRENCH AND THE I. AND IV. CORPS

26 Oct.  
Map 21.  
Sketch 9.

Except for the fighting on the front of the 20th Brigade at Kruiseecke already mentioned, and for almost uninterrupted attacks on the French IX. Corps, the night of the 25th/26th passed fairly quietly. At 8.30 P.M. on the 25th, in view of eventualities, General Haig ordered an infantry and an artillery brigade of the 1st Division to be at Veldhoek at 5.30 A.M., ready to support either the 2nd or 7th Divisions. The 1st (Guards) Brigade and the XXVI. Brigade R.F.A. were detailed for this duty.

Sir John French merely ordered that the action of the 25th should be continued on the 26th, with the same objectives and on the same lines as before, always taking the time from the left.<sup>1</sup> Thus British movements again depended on the advance of the troops of General Dubois. Owing to a variety of circumstances the French again made little progress.<sup>2</sup> First, General d'Urbal—with the intention of disengaging the front of the Belgian Army and enlarging the indentation already made in the German line—ordered that the front of the attack of the IX. Corps should be extended westwards to include Poelcappelle, which was to be taken first, unless this village and the original objective to the south-east of it, Passchendaele, could be taken simultaneously. He promised the 31st Division should join in the attack by 12 noon. General Dubois, therefore, changed the targets of his heavy artillery, and those of many of his other guns, from Passchendaele to Poelcappelle, and put the weight of his troops on his

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 34.

<sup>2</sup> The operations of the day are very fully described by General Dubois, ii. pp. 31-41.



left. When, however, his infantry attack, by six bat- 26 Oct.  
talions, was launched about 3 P.M., it found an intact  
German front, well wired and defended, not broken by  
previous fighting as on the Passchendaele side; and it  
could not get on. Further, the 31st Division did not  
appear: in fact, its head, marching through Ypres, only  
reached the rendezvous, St. Julien, at 5 P.M., far too late  
in the day at the end of October for troops to be engaged  
on ground unknown to them.

In the centre of the IX. Corps towards Passchendaele,  
despite the reduced means of attack, advances of four to  
five hundred yards were accomplished; but on its right  
less progress was made. On this flank four of its battalions  
strayed across the British front, and drew from General  
Dubois a sharp message, that they were out of their zone  
and even interfering with the British progress, and an  
order to return at once north of the railway line. As  
a general result there was much delay, and a great  
opportunity to drive off the Germans near Passchendaele  
seems to have been missed. But what is quite certain is  
that, owing to incessant fighting for four days and nights,  
the IX. Corps was very greatly fatigued.

General Haig hoped on this day to regain possession  
of Becelaere, so lightly abandoned by the 7th Division on  
the 19th. His first orders after the morning reconnaissance  
directed the continuation of the progressive attacks by the  
2nd Division on the right of the French, and sent the 1st  
Division (less the 1st Brigade and batteries in reserve at  
Veldhoek) to assemble in corps reserve, about half a mile  
east of Hooge. Subsequently, he proceeded to Veldhoek,  
and instructed Br.-General FitzClarence (commanding the  
1st Brigade) to get into communication with Lord Cavan  
(commanding the 4th Brigade), the right of the 2nd Division,  
and to take his brigade up on the right of the 4th as the  
advance progressed. He gave the general direction of  
Poezelhoek for the 1st and Reutel for the 4th Brigade.

In the 2nd Division there was, however, little change  
in the earlier part of the day, for no French advance took  
place. The division had two brigades in line: on the  
right the 4th and on the left the 6th, with the 5th Brigade  
in reserve. Patrols sent out in the early morning dis-  
covered a gap in the German line between Reutel and the  
Broodseinde—Zonnebeke road; but unfortunately it was  
filled again before any advantage could be taken of it.  
At 11.30 A.M., whilst waiting for the French, Br.-General



R. Fanshawe (6th Brigade) sent the 2/South Staffordshire—who had to pass through the 1/R. Berkshire, the left of his brigade—to begin working forward with the 1/King's and 1/K.R.R.C. But the German artillery fire along the whole length of the line was heavy, and the ground was open and dotted with houses that served as German machine-gun nests. Thus, although the 47th and 60th Batteries were pushed up close in support, progress was slow; and the Staffordshire, in consequence of a white flag incident, suffered considerable loss.

Soon an alarming message was received from G.H.Q. It was to the effect that the 2nd Division might expect to be counter-attacked by the whole of the enemy's disposable reserve, eight battalions and six batteries. For the time, therefore, further advance of the division was stopped. About 3 P.M. another message from G.H.Q. arrived at the 2nd Division headquarters, forwarding information, from an intercepted wireless message, of quite a different purport. This stated that the German *XXVII. Reserve Corps* was calling for assistance, and was barely able to hold its own.<sup>1</sup>

At 3.30 P.M., therefore, General Monro ordered the 6th Brigade to renew its attack, and he sent the 5th from divisional reserve to a position of readiness to co-operate with it. The 6th, whilst advancing, was heavily counter-attacked by the enemy, and dug in under cover of hedges some three hundred yards from his line. The 5th Brigade, now called on, did not get up in line with the 6th until daylight had failed; and, as the ground over which it had to pass had not been reconnoitred, the G.O.C. 2nd Division deemed it advisable to stop further advance. He sent the 5th Brigade back into Veldhoek Woods, about three-quarters of a mile behind the right of the 6th Brigade. The 4th Brigade, being dependent on the advance of the 6th on its left, hardly moved, though it suffered heavily from machine-gun and some artillery fire. Thus, practically no progress was made by the 2nd Division, except to gain a little more ground on the top of the ridge.

The operations of the 7th Division must be dealt with

<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by the German account ("Ypres", p. 55), wherein it is stated that the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* asked for the support of *XXVI.* near the junction of the two corps near Zonnebeke, but the latter was unable to render any, and the defence had to be left to artillery. This possibly refers to the gap observed by the 2nd Division in the early morning, which may have been occasioned by part of the *51st Division* being taken out and used further south in the attack on Kruiseecke (see p. 243).

next, for the efforts of the 1st Division were mainly directed 26 Oct. to assisting it, and were consequent on the troubles that befell General Capper's command.

At 9 A.M. on the 26th October, the enemy, in no way satisfied with the failure of his night operation to capture Kruseecke, recommenced, both from the south and east, his heavy bombardment of the 20th Brigade salient. In spite of the fire of the 7th Division artillery, supported by a howitzer brigade and a 6-inch howitzer battery lent by the 2nd Division, the German bombardment grew in intensity as the hours passed, and 8-inch howitzer shells mixed with lighter calibres were rained on the trenches. Quite early in the day, the trenches of the two companies of the 2/Scots Guards holding the apex of the salient—these companies had taken part in the counter-attack on the village on the previous night—were completely destroyed, and many men were buried and had to be dug out, whilst others were suffocated. The same fate a little later befell the trenches of the 1/Grenadier Guards—which had rather over a company in the firing line—north of the Scots Guards on the eastern face of the salient, and those of the 1/South Staffordshire (22nd Brigade) and 2/Border Regiment on the southern face. About 9 A.M. the Germans<sup>1</sup> who had concentrated during the night in the woods in front, began to show themselves, and a party of about fifty, aided by the hedges, actually managed to creep through the line between the Scots Guards and the South Staffordshire. The British battalions, who saw them only after they had passed, refrained from firing for fear of hitting their own people, and a small number of men who went in pursuit seem to have been killed or wounded. Thus it happened that some of the Germans escaped and remained hidden in the woods. Although shrapnel and machine-gun bullets and 8-inch high-explosive shells were sweeping and destroying the exposed British trenches, it was not until 10 A.M.—both British and German accounts

<sup>1</sup> The attack was made by the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* (apparently with both its divisions mixed up), north of the Ypres—Menin road, and by part of the *51st Reserve Division*, *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, and the *3rd Cavalry Division*, and *Schulenberg's Landwehr Brigade* (5 battalions) against Kruseecke, with Petersen's 3 *Jäger* battalions and the *7th* and *Bavarian Cavalry Divisions* south of them. Poseck, p. 195.

Thus there were at least 3 battalions of the *242nd Infantry Regiment*, a battalion of the *233rd Infantry Regiment*, 3 battalions from the *3rd Cavalry Division* (counting a cavalry brigade as equivalent in rifle strength to a battalion), 5 battalions of *Schulenberg's Brigade*, and 3 of Petersen's—15 in all—against the 4 battalions of the 20th Brigade plus one of the 22nd.

agree as to the time—that the enemy could make any definite advance. Then, by the ruse of some of the enemy behind the British line shouting “Retire!”, a few of the 1/South Staffordshire—thinking, not unnaturally, that they were to withdraw a little to evade the bombardment, as was now the custom—commenced to go back. The sight of this was signal enough for the Germans. About noon they broke in on the southern face of the salient; overwhelmed the two companies of the Border Regiment who were still in the line, so that only 70 men of them escaped; and, passing on, swept into the village of Kruiseecke, behind the line of the Scots Guards and Grenadier Guards. They were seen by the headquarters of the 1st (Guards) Brigade, then in reserve near Veldhoek, crossing the Gheluvelt road between the 8th and 9th kilometre stones, and stragglers of the 20th Brigade soon began to drift back with the usual tales of disaster. The two companies of the Scots Guards and the company of the Grenadier Guards, having been told to hold the line at all costs, clung to their position. The former were entirely cut off, and between noon and 2.30 P.M. were gradually captured in small parties.<sup>1</sup> Part of the company of the Grenadiers was more fortunate and by sheer audacity fought its way through the enemy behind it, at the sacrifice of two platoons which were isolated and cut off.

There was at first every appearance of a grave disaster, but luckily the Germans were checked by the reserve of the 2/Border Regiment on the line of brigade headquarters. Eventually a new line was formed by General Ruggles-Brise with the supports and remnants of the firing line of the Scots Guards, Border Regiment and South Staffordshire. This line cut off the Kruiseecke salient and ran in a curve bent outwards from the left of the 2/Gordon Highlanders—the right of the 20th Brigade, which had withstood

<sup>1</sup> The Germans captured 9 officers, among whom they count 2 killed and 2 wounded, and about three hundred other ranks. Poseck, p. 195. The following account has been furnished by the *Reichsarchiv*, Berlin:

“According to the war diary of the *Dragoon Regiment 23*, during the “attack on Kruiseecke, 1 officer and 60 men of the Scots Guards, whose “trenches had been severely battered by accurate fire of an 8-inch mortar “battery, were overrun and captured by an ‘assault’ detachment of this “regiment.

“As far as can be ascertained, the 300 men were not taken all at once, “but in small parties corresponding to the progress of the German attack “on Kruiseecke. This attack went specially well on the German left wing, “whilst the right [that is against the 21st Brigade] as a result of the good “effect of several British machine guns, stood still.”



all attacks—to the right of the 21st Brigade in front of 26 Oct. Gheluvelt.

When the Germans were seen behind the 20th Brigade, General Capper called upon the neighbouring troops to render assistance, and despatched the three remaining battalions of the 22nd Brigade, then in divisional reserve, to counter-attack. The 1st Brigade, in consequence, sent the Black Watch up to the left of the 20th near Gheluvelt, whilst on the right the Cavalry Corps made a diversion with the Royal Horse Guards.<sup>1</sup>

The 22nd Brigade had remained in reserve half a mile east of Veldhoek all the morning; and when Br.-General Lawford received orders from divisional headquarters to counter-attack south-eastwards in the direction of Tenbrielen, with the object of relieving the pressure on the 20th Brigade, he moved the 2/R. Warwickshire and 1/R. Welch Fusiliers north of the 20th Brigade through Gheluvelt, south of and parallel to the Menin road. Lawford's battalions soon came under heavy shell fire, and when about a mile south-east of Gheluvelt he received a report from an officer of the 20th Brigade that this formation was already withdrawing. He therefore considered that his orders no longer corresponded to the situation, and decided to occupy the ground on the spur east of Gheluvelt to cover the retirement of the 20th Brigade. But the information was misleading. About 3.15 P.M. General Ruggles-Brise, finding Germans working round both his flanks, had ordered the batteries of the XIV. Brigade R.H.A., which were supporting him, to fall back to the next ridge in rear, and the main body of the 1/Grenadier Guards, which had not been in the firing line, had soon after retired to the guns. The situation at dark was as a result that, instead of a salient at Kruseecke, there was a large re-entrant angle, formed by the 20th Brigade facing roughly east from near Zandvoorde northwards, and the 22nd, on its left, facing nearly south near Gheluvelt.

The enemy, however, made no attempt to follow up his success against the 20th Brigade, which remained in its second position, in a hollow, supported by the Black Watch on its left, south of the Menin road, until 8 P.M. when it was withdrawn to the ridge in rear behind the Basseville stream.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the same hour, 7th Division headquarters

<sup>1</sup> See p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> See Sketch A. The stream is between Zandvoorde and Kl. Zillebeke.



directed the 22nd Brigade to connect with the Black Watch near the 8th kilometre stone (about half a mile east of the centre of Gheluvelt); and to extend to the right so as to cover the re-entrant in the line and join up with the 3rd Cavalry Division at Zandvoorde, thus practically reoccupying the line on which the 20th Brigade had been rallied after the noon attacks. This movement, though not interrupted, took the whole night, and was not entirely completed until 7 A.M., and it greatly fatigued the troops.

The casualties in the 20th Brigade—which was reduced to 70 officers and 2,400 other ranks—in the 24 hours were a little over one thousand, of which some two-thirds fell on the 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border Regiment, who mustered on the 27th October, 460 and 538 of all ranks, respectively. The 1/South Staffordshire whilst attached to the 20th Brigade lost 13 officers and 440 other ranks.

Except for heavy shelling, the 21st Brigade on the left of the 7th Division north of the Menin road, reported a quiet day on the 26th October, though it is now known that its fire decisively stopped a serious German attack.<sup>1</sup> As the troops on its left did not progress, it also made no advance. At dusk it was relieved by the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division, and was withdrawn into reserve at Veldhoek.

The losses of the 7th Division in its nine days' continuous fighting amounted by the evening of the 26th October to 43·6 per cent of the officers and 37·2 of the men. The total casualties in the three infantry brigades amounted to :—20th Brigade, 46 officers and 1,402 men ; 21st, 55 officers and 1,284 men ; 22nd, 61 officers and 1,634 men. Both Sir John French and General Rawlinson were of opinion that the heavy losses were due in some measure to the nature of the trenches favoured by the divisional commander—the type used by the Japanese at Port Arthur, with overhead cover—and to these trenches being sited on the forward rather than the reverse slope. In the main the casualties were the inevitable consequence of the overwhelming superiority of the enemy's heavy artillery, and of the task successfully carried out by the division, of meeting the first onslaught of the numerically stronger young German divisions, on a front of considerably over five miles in which was included an awkward salient. The length of line allowed of nothing but battle reserves being kept in hand, and of no possibility of relief from the

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, p. 246.

strain of incessant exposure and readiness for action in the 26 Oct. trenches.

Turning now to the 1st Division: the 2nd Brigade, with the XXV. Brigade R.F.A., engineers and mounted divisional troops, was for the whole day in corps reserve between Hooze and Ypres; the rest of its units were sent to support the 2nd and 7th Divisions. The 1st Brigade, with the XXVI. Brigade R.F.A., had at 5.30 A.M. reached Veldhoek, as ordered on the previous night, behind the right of the 2nd Division; two battalions, the 1/Scots Guards and 1/Coldstream, reinforced the firing line, and they assisted in the attack of the 4th (Guards) Brigade<sup>1</sup> towards Reutel, which, owing to the enemy's fire, made no progress. Just before 11.30 A.M., when it was seen that the Germans had broken through on the left centre of the 7th Division, Br.-General FitzClarence sent the Black Watch to hold the Zandvoorde—Gheluvelt road—where it came in touch with the left of the 20th Brigade—and to stop any withdrawal, and reported this to divisional headquarters, where General Haig happened to be. On receipt of the information the latter gave verbal orders to General Lomax to send another infantry brigade (the 3rd) with artillery to Veldhoek. By the afternoon, the 1st Brigade, with the 3rd in support, was extended and digging in behind the front of the 7th Division, with its right, the 1/Black Watch, south of kilometre-stone 9 on the Menin road, and its left, the 1/Scots Guards, as far north as Reutel. In the course of the day it filled with the 1/Cameron Highlanders a gap between the 20th and 22nd Brigades.

About 4 P.M. corps orders were issued for the 3rd Brigade to counter-attack and recover Kruiseecke, but before these could take effect an air report was received which indicated the presence of a new enemy division<sup>2</sup> about two and a half miles east of Becelaere, with one brigade near Dadizele, and the other a couple of miles further south. In view of these reinforcements, General Haig directed the G.O.C. 1st Division to place the 1st and 3rd Brigades across the Menin road, with one brigade south of it. By arrangement, the 1st Brigade about midnight relieved, as we have seen, the 21st north of the road, which then went

<sup>1</sup> See p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Probably the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division (see "Ypres", p. 58). Prisoners taken at Kruiseecke saw a division near Becelaere as they were marched away.

into reserve at Veldhoek; but General Lomax, finding that the 22nd Brigade had been ordered by the 7th Division to cover the ground south of the Menin road, sent the 3rd into bivouac in the woods west of Veldhoek. Previously, towards 10 P.M. as an attack seemed to be developing against the right of the 2nd Division opposite Becelaere, the 1/Gloucestershire had been sent from the 3rd Brigade, towards the junction of the 1st and 2nd Divisions.

Thus after midnight when the movements were completed<sup>1</sup> the British front from Zandvoorde to east of Zonnebeke, 5 miles, was occupied from right to left by the 22nd, 1st, 4th and 6th Brigades—a mere outpost line—with the remnants of the 20th, the 21st, 3rd, 2nd and 5th in support and in reserve. Behind the French IX. Corps, the 31st Division had arrived at St. Julien.

#### THE CAVALRY CORPS

Map 21.  
Sketch 9.

In order to conform with the instructions for a forward movement in conjunction with the 7th Division, General Allenby at 12.30 P.M. on the 26th October issued orders for the 1st Cavalry Division (less the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, which had been sent to report to the II. Corps at Hinges)<sup>2</sup> to hold its right as a pivot, whilst the two battalions (the 1/Connaught Rangers and the 57th Rifles) of the Ferozepore Brigade, facing south-east, and the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions, facing south-east and south, advanced at 3 P.M. so as to converge on Houthem. The two battalions moved on Garde Dieu and Oosttaverne, which lie in front of Messines and Wytschaete, and captured the enemy's front trenches, gaining about a quarter of a mile of ground; and the attack of the 2nd Cavalry Division from Hollebeke Chateau down the canal towards Houthem, led by the 4th Hussars and supported by the 129th Baluchis, advanced even more. But before the 3rd Cavalry Division could begin its converging movement southwards to co-operate with the 2nd, it received information of the unfortunate situation of the 7th Division on its left in consequence of the enemy's attack on Kruseecke. General Byng therefore, with General Allenby's approval, stopped the movement. At 3.20 P.M. he was called upon by General Capper to assist in covering the retirement of the 20th Brigade, but, owing to his wide front and small numbers, he could

<sup>1</sup> Map 21 shows the line at night, before the movements were completed.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 210 and 215.



only spare a regiment to make a demonstration. The 26 Oct.  
 Royal Horse Guards of the 7th Cavalry Brigade, in reserve in the Klein Zillebeke woods, were selected for the duty, and moved mounted behind the line eastwards to Zandvoorde. There one squadron dismounted on the ridge and opened fire from the summit, whilst the other two galloped some distance further east and extended the front to the right, thus flanking the German advance. The enemy turned towards them and they came under heavy fire, but light was already beginning to fail, and no attack followed. After dark the squadrons were withdrawn, having accomplished what had been asked of them with the loss of 8 men and 25 horses.

As the position gained during the afternoon by the Ferozepore Brigade and the 2nd Cavalry Division was in every way inferior to the line that had been held and worked on for some days, at 5 P.M. all troops of the Cavalry Corps which had advanced were ordered to return to their old trenches.<sup>1</sup>

#### GENERAL SITUATION ON THE NIGHT OF THE 26TH/27TH OCTOBER 1914

On the Belgian front, the Germans, after the failures of the 25th, had decided that "another artillery bombardment was indispensable to success"<sup>2</sup> and proceeded to carry it out, whilst small parties of infantry continued to attack and keep the French and Belgians constantly on the alert. Two battalions of Senegalese arrived to relieve some of the Naval Brigade in Dixmude, but otherwise the prospect seemed gloomy, as Belgian gun ammunition was running short, and from incessant firing many guns were becoming unserviceable.<sup>3</sup>

The general result of the day had been that the French had widened their front of attack towards Passchendaele and Poeleappelle, and their 18th Division had gained a few hundred yards; the British had lost Kruseecke and the knoll on which it stood, where the 20th Brigade, in a nasty salient, had been shelled without much chance of reply. The day had been unfavourable for air reconnais-

<sup>1</sup> The German account of the cavalry operations opposite General Allenby has no entry on this day, except as regards the participation of the 3rd Cavalry Division in the attack on Kruseecke.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> "Military Operations of Belgium", pp. 82-3.



sance, and apart from the report of the presence of a fresh German division behind Becelaere there was no news.

Telegraphing to Lord Kitchener at 8 p.m., Sir John French, who had visited the headquarters of the II. and III. Corps during the day, expressed his confidence that these formations would be able to hold their own. Although the 7th Division had been hard pressed, he believed, on reliable information, that the Germans were "quite incapable of making any strong and sustained attack", on account of the tremendous losses they had suffered, and were only able to maintain their position by the support of their very powerful artillery. The Secretary of State for War, in reply, promised him six Territorial battalions to replace the six units, the 1/Dorsetshire, 2/Sherwood Foresters, 2/Royal Irish, 2/Leinster, 2/Wiltshire and 1/Cheshire, which had had the heaviest casualties.<sup>1</sup> To provide against a possible reverse and a forced re-embarkation, officers were sent from the United Kingdom to reconnoitre defensive positions round Boulogne and Calais.

Neither General d'Urbal nor Sir John French saw any reason for a change of plan, and both directed a vigorous continuation of the attack next day.<sup>2</sup> The latter commander ordered the I. Corps to attack, and the 7th Division and the three divisions of the Cavalry Corps to assist it; whilst, as already related, the II. and III. Corps were to take vigorous local offensive, if opportunity occurred.

#### 27TH AND 28TH OCTOBER: DEADLOCK. THE FRENCH IX. AND BRITISH I. CORPS

**Map 22.** Although the orders for an advance depending on the progress of the French IX. Corps—now reinforced by the 31st Division—remained good and were repeated on the 27th and 28th October, the situation scarcely changed in the course of those days. During the opening of the battle, 21st to 24th October, six German divisions, with two cavalry divisions, and supported by an abundance of heavy guns, had been unable, with numerical superiority of two to one, to sweep away the British 1st, 2nd and 7th Divisions

<sup>1</sup> He notified also the promotion to Lieutenant-General of Major-General S. H. Lomax, commanding the 1st Division; and to Major-General of Br.-Generals H. J. S. Landon (3rd Brigade), H. F. M. Wilson (4th Division), D. Henderson (Royal Flying Corps), J. A. L. Haldane (10th Brigade), H. S. Home (R.A., I. Corps), F. D. V. Wing (C.R.A. 3rd Division), Hubert Gough (2nd Cavalry Division), E. S. Bulfin (2nd Brigade) and A. G. Hunter-Weston (11th Brigade).

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 35.

and 3rd Cavalry Division, caught in the open endeavouring to advance. It was therefore not altogether astonishing that three British and three French divisions, with three cavalry divisions, without any heavy artillery worthy of mention, were unable to make headway against the original German force of similar strength, dug in on very favourable ground, and reinforced by the equivalent in infantry of three more divisions. 27 Oct.

At 6.30 A.M. on the 27th, General Dubois again ordered his divisions eastward: 18th Division on the right, 17th Division in the centre and the 31st on the left, with a special flank guard under General Hély d'Oissel—consisting of the 7th Cavalry Division and two infantry regiments (one each from the 17th and 18th Divisions)—on the extreme left towards Poelcappelle. The French had a front of about three miles, as against the five miles held by the three British divisions, but every step of advance was enfiladed by cross gun and machine-gun fire from the high ground at Passchendaele and Poelcappelle. "The gain made during the day was limited to a few houses taken by the 114th Regiment (17th Division), a few trenches by the 77th (18th Division), a very slight advance of the 66th (18th Division) and 12th (31st Division) on Poelcappelle, and very feeble progress of the 31st Division." <sup>1</sup>

As on the previous days, the small progress made by the French reacted on the British 2nd Division on their right. General Monro ordered the 4th Brigade, his right, to hold its ground at first; the 6th to advance in conjunction with the French 36th Brigade; and the 5th to support the 6th. It was arranged that any gap that might occur between the French and British should be filled by dismounted men of the French 6th Cavalry Division, then in reserve to the IX. Corps. The French infantry, waiting for their artillery to have effect, made no advance until 11.20 A.M., and at 11.55 A.M. the regiment nearest the left of the British was checked. The 2/South Staffordshire and 1/K.R.R.C. (6th Brigade) continued to go on, and gained over a thousand yards of ground. They reached the north and south track at the bottom of the U-shaped valley between the main Passchendaele ridge and the Keiberg spur, an underfeature which, owing to change of direction of the ridge southwards, after a time becomes parallel to it. Further advance across a stream, beyond the track, and up the glaciais of open cultivated ground to Keiberg, proved

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 42.

impossible, though guns were sent forward, and one 18-pdr. of the 70th Battery was actually brought up into the front line. About 2 P.M. both the Staffordshire and K.R.R.C. dug in where they lay. During the day, the former battalion lost 5 officers and 115 men, and the Rifles, 6 officers and 167 men, including Prince Maurice of Battenberg, who was killed outright crossing the top of the main ridge. At 3 P.M. General Monro (2nd Division) went to 6th Brigade headquarters to settle on further action. In view of the lateness of the hour and the strength of the enemy's position, it was decided that substantial artillery preparation against Keiberg spur was necessary, and that the attack must be postponed until next day.

Turning to the 1st Division on the right of the 2nd, rumours of the massing of Germans in front of the 1st Brigade across and north of the Gheluvelt-Menin road, continuing to come in, in the early part of the morning the 1st Division remained, with the 2nd and 3rd Brigades in reserve, awaiting attack. There was intermittent shelling all day, but no German offensive took place. At 5.15 A.M. orders had been issued for the 3rd Brigade to take over the front of the 22nd between the 1st and Zandvoorde; General Landon detailed two battalions, 2/Welch and 1/South Wales Borderers, to do so by daylight; but owing to enemy gun and rifle fire, it was impossible to effect the reliefs, though they were begun, and the battalions of the 3rd and 22nd Brigades in consequence were more or less mixed up.

Towards noon Sir John French visited I. Corps headquarters at Hooze Chateau, and decided to place the 7th Division under Sir Douglas Haig: the 3rd Cavalry Division had already been taken out of the IV. Corps and attached to the Cavalry Corps, and there was no object in retaining a corps staff to administer one division. General Rawlinson with part of his staff proceeded to the United Kingdom to superintend the organization and training of the 8th Division, which, when sent to France, was to constitute with the 7th the new IV. Corps.

At 3.30 P.M. General Haig issued instructions for a redistribution of the line of his troops:—

- 7th Division from Chateau east of Zandvoorde (left of Cavalry Corps), to the Menin road.
- 1st Division from left of 7th to a point immediately west of Reutel village.
- 2nd Division from left of 1st to near Zonnebeke—Roulers road (right of French).



This redistribution may have seemed hard on the 7th 27 Oct. Division, but it must not be overlooked that the 1st and 2nd Divisions had been fighting since August, and the 7th for less than a month. It released the 3rd Brigade, which was south of the Menin road, but involved the 7th Division taking over a battalion front south of the Menin road held by the 1st Brigade, as well as the 3rd Brigade line. General Capper therefore sent up the 21st Brigade into the fighting line again, and withdrew the 22nd, which had suffered considerably, into reserve. This movement was not completed until midnight, and added another night of unrest to the already heavy total of the 7th Division. In personally inspecting the front line during the night, General Capper found a gap into which he had to send a battalion of the 22nd, and on the 28th moved up the 20th Brigade to hold the sector nearest the Menin road, thus reducing his reserve to three very weak battalions, behind a front of 3,000 yards held by about five thousand men and under threat of attack.

In the 1st Division, at night, the 1st Brigade was again the only one in the line, holding the whole divisional front; the 2nd Brigade was concentrated in bivouac near Veldhoek, and the 3rd near Hooze. Thus, there were still these two brigades, besides the 5th and the 22nd (3 battalions), in reserve, and 5 brigades held the five-mile front.

Little information had been gleaned during the day. There were no indications of further arrival of enemy troops, except news that a force of about one division was moving north from about Lille in the direction of Dadizeele.<sup>1</sup>

Sir John French, on the night of the 27th October, expressed himself as confident and very hopeful; he considered that it was only necessary to press the enemy hard in order to ensure complete success and victory.

On the 28th October, to commence again with the 28 Oct.  
Map 23. French: the IX. Corps had "the same orders, same mission and same objectives as on the 27th. All the morning was spent in a strong artillery preparation, and the infantry attacks were initiated at 12 noon. There were the same partial advantages as on the previous day, the same failure of the German counter-attacks. The French dominated the enemy, but could not make serious progress."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Probably belated intelligence of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, already noticed (see p. 249).

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 42.



The night of the 27th/28th had been disturbed on the 2nd Division front, the Germans attacking seriously at 10 P.M. and 4 A.M., with minor attempts between; but, as the morning was fine and clear, rendering artillery observation easier, General Monro did not wait for the French, and opened fire with all his divisional artillery at 9.30 A.M., assisted by the naval armoured train firing from near Zonnebeke with a 6-inch and a 4·7-inch gun, and by a 4·7-inch battery. Towards 11 A.M. the 5th and 6th Brigades went forward, the 4th on their right being warned to be ready to support them. The 6th was immediately stopped by shell fire, and the two leading battalions of the 5th, the 2/Highland Light Infantry and 2/Connaught Rangers, which were to pass through the right battalion of the 6th Brigade, were unable to get beyond its front trenches. It was not until late in the afternoon that some slight advance was made.

The 1st Division had a quiet day, part of its artillery firing to assist the 2nd Division. The 7th Division, though under an unpleasant fire both of guns and snipers, was not seriously attacked.

At 3 P.M. G.H.Q. telephoned to General Haig an intercepted German wireless message which contained an order to the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* to attack in the direction of Kruseecke—Gheluvelt at 5.30 A.M. on the 29th, in postponement of an offensive ordered for the 28th. On receipt of this information the brigades were warned confidentially, and particular care was taken by all battalions to see that rifles were free from dust and grit, from which great trouble had been experienced, and to ensure that they were fit for rapid fire. As response to the expected German movement, General Haig determined to persevere with the attack of the 2nd Division, with the 1st in support, whilst the 7th Division held on. General d'Urbal also ordered the IX. Corps to continue its operations, saying "the density of the effectives of your sector gives hope that we may make a great step forward."<sup>1</sup>

There was little to be learnt from the air this day of the possibility of a coming storm. The chief feature of the aviation reports was the very large amount of transport seen on the roads between Roulers and Moorslede, leading towards Ypres. Allowing for the double and even treble banking seen, there seemed to be some fifteen miles of vehicles in all, and it was thought that part at least of these columns consisted of refugees' vehicles.

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 43.

27-28  
Oct.

## THE CAVALRY CORPS

During the 27th and 28th the Cavalry Corps remained on the defensive. Some half-hearted attacks made by the enemy were repulsed. The German Cavalry record contains no entry for these days, except a complaint that the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* on the right of the *3rd Cavalry Division* could not get forward. Map 22.  
Sketch 9.

GENERAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH ON THE  
28TH/29TH OCTOBER

According to both Belgian and German accounts, the 27th and 28th October passed in comparative calm on the Yser. There were bombardments of the Belgian position and of the town of Dixmude, intermittent on account of lack of ammunition.<sup>1</sup> Such attacks as were made were repulsed. There was a strong suspicion, which subsequently proved correct, that the enemy was shifting troops southwards. Sketch 6.

The outstanding event of these days was that at high water, on the evening of the 28th, after an unsuccessful attempt on the evening of the 27th,<sup>2</sup> the Belgian engineers succeeded in opening the gates of the old Furnes lock at Nieuport, and letting in the sea between the Yser and the embankment of the Dixmude—Nieuport railway.<sup>3</sup>

Sir John French, to whom the commencement of the inundation had been communicated by Belgian headquarters, considered the situation north of Ypres satisfactory and hopeful, and attached no importance to the loss of Neuve Chapelle by the II. Corps, reporting that on the left of the B.E.F. ground was being gained, whilst the right was holding well.

Operations were begun on this day to shift the stores at the bases at St. Nazaire and Nantes back to Havre and Rouen.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> "B.B.S.M." July 1920, p. 130, where there is an account of the formation of the inundation.

<sup>3</sup> In 1708, Vendôme, in order to interfere with the communications of Marlborough's Army before Lille, inundated the country between Bruges and Nieuport. See "Compleat History of the late War in the Netherlands" by Tho. Brodriek, Gent., 1713, p. 260, and Marlborough's Despatch of 19th October 1708.

<sup>4</sup> See Note II. on Lines of Communication at end of Chapter.

**Sketch 5.** To sum up, the situation of the British front on the night of the 28th/29th October was :—

II. Corps . . . . La Bassée Canal to Rouges Bancs  
(with Lahore Division (5 miles S.S.W. of Armentières),  
and 2nd Cavalry but west of Neuve Chapelle ;  
Brigade). its relief by the Indian Corps  
about to begin.

III. Corps . . . . From Rouges Bancs, via Touquet,  
(with 19th Infantry Epinette, Houplines, Le Gheer,  
Brigade). St. Yves to the Douve.

**Sketch 9.** Cavalry Corps . . . . From the Douve, via Messines to  
Zandvoorde.

I. Corps . . . . Chateau east of Zandvoorde to  
(1st, 2nd and 7th Divi- near the Zonnebeke—Roulers  
sions). road, with 5 out of the 9 in-  
fantry brigades in the line.

**Sketch 6.** On the right of the B.E.F. was the French Tenth Army of General de Maud'huy, and on the left the French Army Group of General d'Urbal. The latter was distributed :—

IX. Corps . . . . From left of British to near Poel-  
(17th, 18th, and 31st cappelle.  
Divisions, 6th Cavalry  
Division).

Hély d'Oissel's detachment  
(7th Cavalry Division  
and 2 infantry regi-  
ments).

de Mitry's detachment . . . . Thence to Steenstraat.  
(4th and 5th Cavalry  
Divisions, 87th Terri-  
torial Division).

Humbert's detachment . . . . Along Yser Canal to Dixmude.  
(89th Territorial Divi-  
sion and 3 cavalry  
regiments).

Ronarc'h's Naval Brigade . . . . Dixmude.  
and Senegalese.

42nd Division, 9th Cavalry . . . . With the Belgian Army, in re-  
Division. serve

Belgian Army . . . . Along railway Dixmude — Nieu-  
port.



## NOTE I.

## THE GERMAN PLANS

It will be remembered that on the evening of the 24th October Map 2.  
Sketch A. the Duke Albrecht of Württemberg, commanding the German *Fourth Army*, had recognized the impossibility of breaking the British line near Ypres with the forces at his disposal, and had ordered the *XXIII.*, *XXVI.* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps* to hold on and gain ground if opportunity offered.<sup>1</sup> The *Sixth Army*, under Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, had likewise failed to break through the II. and III. Corps, as it was intended to do.<sup>2</sup> The German General Staff, therefore, began to consider a plan for concentrating another Army, or an Army Group, between the *Fourth* and *Sixth Armies*, behind the front occupied by the four cavalry corps—St. Yves to Gheluvelt—and for attempting to break through with this new force south of Ypres north-westwards towards the line Messines—Hollebeke—Zandvoorde. On the 27th October, General von Falkenhayn, Chief of the General Staff, arrived at *Sixth Army* headquarters to make the final arrangements and issue orders. A new Army Group was formed and placed under the command of General von Fabeck of the *XIII. Corps*. It consisted of the *II. Bavarian Corps* from the *Second Army* near Péronne, the *XV. Corps* from the Aisne, the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* from the *Fourth Army*, and the *26th Division* of the *XIII. Corps*, about to be relieved by the *48th Reserve Division*,<sup>3</sup> opposite the junction of the British II. and III. Corps. This meant a net increase of six divisions on the Ypres front from the Lys to Bixschoote where the French and British had already only six and a half divisions against nine and a half, and five cavalry divisions against eight, and gave the Germans two-fold numerical superiority. Fabeck was also allotted the *I. Cavalry Corps*, the *11th Landwehr Brigade* and six unbrigaded battalions.<sup>4</sup> But with artillery the enemy was even more richly provided. Whilst the heavy artillery, outside the divisional 60-pdr. batteries, at the disposal of the British Commander-in-Chief at Ypres, consisted of two batteries of old 6-inch howitzers, two batteries of 4·7-inch guns and one naval armoured train with one 6-inch and one 4-inch gun—18 guns in all, or 26 including the 60-pdrs.—the heavy artillery allotted to Fabeck's *Army Group* was "8 batteries of mortars, 60 "batteries of heavy field howitzers,<sup>5</sup> and a 30·5 cm. [12-inch] coast "defence mortar", over two hundred and fifty heavy guns in all.

A general offensive by the right wing and centre of the *Sixth Army*, Fabeck's *Army Group* and the whole of the *Fourth Army* was ordered for the 30th, when Fabeck was to break through.<sup>6</sup> To cover the concentration of his force, the *Cavalry Corps*, *6th Bavarian Reserve*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", pp. 25 and 59.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Poseck, p. 197, gives the battalions: *Guard*, *4th*, *9th* and *10th Jäger*, with two battalions of the *134th Infantry Regiment (XIX. Corps)*.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these batteries would be of 4 howitzers, others—the heavier ones—of 2. For the total number of British heavy guns employed at Ypres see Chapter V. p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> "Ypres", p. 63.



*Division and the XXVII. Corps* were to attack against Gheluvelt on the 29th, which day therefore marks the beginning of the great offensive at Ypres, and the cessation of serious efforts south of the Lys to the La Bassée Canal.

## NOTE II.

## THE BRITISH LINES OF COMMUNICATION OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1914

(1) *Dates on which the Northern Ports were reopened*

(a) *Havre* : Began to be re-used for small consignments of urgent ammunition, etc., Territorial battalions, etc., from 15th September onwards, but no depot or permanent installation was permitted there. It was not until 13th October that the reopening of Havre as the main British base was sanctioned.

(b) *Rouen* : Odd consignments and individuals became sufficiently numerous to require the appointment of a Railway Transport Officer on 24th September ; but, like Havre, the reopening of Rouen as a base was not sanctioned until 13th October.

(c) *Dieppe* : Was opened for the first time on 26th December.

(d) *Boulogne* : Was used continuously for individuals throughout the early period ; its reopening as a subsidiary base, at first mainly for ammunition and wounded, was approved on 13th October.

(e) *Calais* : Was not made use of as a base until June 1915.

(2) *The Railway Routes taken by British Traffic during the Battles of Ypres*

There was a good deal of cross-country running at this time ; for although the northern ports were reopened in October, St. Nazaire was not closed down until 17th November, and Nantes and Le Mans until later. Roundabout routes, too, were often employed to get the benefit of better lines, or to use single lines in one direction only, the great Poix viaduct on the main line from Rouen to Amiens having been demolished by the French during the retreat to the Seine. Abbeville was the Regulating Station and Boulogne the Advanced Regulating Station of the B.E.F. Between Havre and Abbeville, the following routes were used :

*To the Front* : Havre—Rouen—Abancourt ; then either Gamaches—Longpré—Abbeville, or Eu—Abbeville.

*From the Front* :

Either Abbeville—Amiens—Saleux—St. Omer en Chaussée—Abancourt—Rouen—Havre,  
or Abbeville—Amiens—St. Just—Beauvais—Abancourt—Rouen—Havre.

Between Amiens and Boulogne trains in both directions travelled over the main line via Étapes.

Between Boulogne and the railheads all the trains travelled via Calais, St. Omer and Hazebrouck, but after 15th October, when the break in the line near Arques had been repaired, a few went and more returned via St. Omer, Lumbres and Hesdigneul.

(3) *Railheads during the Battles of Ypres*

Map 1. Railway lines radiated conveniently from St. Omer and Haze-

brouck for the supply of the B.E.F. During the critical part of the Ypres fighting the railheads for *supply* were :—

- (1) On the Hazebrouck—Lillers—Béthune double line :  
Steenbecque (4 miles south of Hazebrouck) for the Cavalry Corps ;  
Chocques (west of Béthune) for the Indian Corps.
- (2) On the Berguette—Armentières single line that branches from (1) :  
St. Venant for the III. Corps and 19th Infantry Brigade ;  
Basse Boulogne (near Merville) for the IV. Corps.
- (3) On the St. Omer—Hazebrouck—Armentières line :  
St. Omer for G.H.Q. and R.F.C. ;  
Hazebrouck (after being at Bailleul) for the I. Corps ;  
Strazeele for the II. Corps.

The *ammunition* railheads were Aire and Arques, both on the St. Omer—Berguette line, the former for the II., III. and Indian Corps, the latter for the remainder of the force.

Great difficulties were experienced in the movement of supply and ammunition columns to refilling points, owing to lack of co-ordination between the Allies. The French used a system of circular routes for the supply of their troops without regard to the British in the vicinity, and frequently changed the routes without any notification. Thus it sometimes happened that motor transport met "head on" on the Belgian roads paved only for the width of one vehicle, and with deep mud on either side, and great delays ensued. Eventually the British sent staff officers to the principal crossing places, who, with the tacit consent of the French, directed the traffic regardless of the fixed circuits.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES (*continued*)

#### BATTLE OF GHELUVELT <sup>1</sup> 29TH-31ST OCTOBER 1914

#### THE FIRST DAY, 29TH OCTOBER: LOSS OF GHELUVELT CROSS ROADS

(Maps 1, 2, 23, 24; Sketches A, 9)

#### ORDERS FOR THE DAY

Map 24. SIR JOHN FRENCH'S orders for the 29th October,<sup>2</sup> issued Sketch 9. at 8.15 P.M. on the previous evening, directed that the offensive in conjunction with the French should be continued in accordance with the instructions previously issued.<sup>3</sup> In compliance with this, General Haig directed that the attack of the 2nd Division should be begun as soon as early morning reconnaissance had been carried out, but timed so that its weight would begin to make itself seriously felt from 9.30 A.M. onwards. He also gave instructions that preparations should be made to concentrate artillery fire on the spur running E.N.E. from Noord Westhoek <sup>4</sup> (1 mile north-west of Becelaere and opposite Polygon Wood), where it seemed that opposition was likely to be strongest. Information of the probable

<sup>1</sup> The great German attempt to break through south-east of Ypres was made, as will be seen, by a single force, Fabeck's *Army Group*, commencing on the 29th October (see page 265 *et seq.*) on a front St. Yves—Gheluvelt, thus including, according to the Battles Nomenclature Committee's Report, part of the Battle of Armentières, the Battle of Messines, and the Battle of Gheluvelt. The story will be related here as a whole, under the title of the Battle of Gheluvelt, as the fighting cannot historically be split up into three separate battles.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 37.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 256. The 2nd Division was to attack with the 1st in support, and the 7th was to hold on.

<sup>4</sup> "Noordemdhoek" on Map 2. Not marked on Sketch A.

German attack on Gheluvelt at 5.30 A.M. had already been sent out; lines of fire for the artillery had been concerted between the three divisions; and all troops were warned to be on the alert. For reasons unknown a rumour became current that the attack would come from Krui-seecke, south of the Menin—Gheluvelt road. 29 Oct.

On the morning of the 29th October, when the second phase of the fighting round Ypres, officially called the Battle of Gheluvelt—was about to open, the Germans were already in a position of vantage. Counting from the north, they held Houthulst Forest and the crest of the Ypres ridge north of Passchendaele and for about one mile south of that village; they had, further, a footing on the top of the ridge of Becelaere and on the spur which runs out eastward from Gheluvelt and ends in the knoll of Krui-seecke. Southward of this, the British held the higher ground—marked by Hollebeke, Wytschaete, the great spur running out to Messines, and Hill 63, north of Ploegsteert Wood. From this point the opposing lines passed down into the flat, low-lying meadows of the valley of the Lys. Map 2.  
Sketch A.

The direction of the expected German offensive would bring it on to the junction of the 7th and 1st Divisions near the cross roads—called at the time the Gheluvelt cross roads—almost exactly one mile south-east of that village where the Menin road crosses the Krui-seecke—Poezelhoek road. That portions of two different divisions might be involved seemed of less disadvantage than usual; for the left battalion of the 7th Division was a Guards battalion, the 1/Grenadiers, and next to it in the line on the right of the 1st Division stood the 1st (Guards) Brigade, with the 1/Coldstream on its right wing. The Grenadiers occupied pieces of trench south of the Menin road, with the 2/Gordon Highlanders on their right, and with what remained of the 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border Regiment in support. These two last-mentioned battalions had been hurriedly moved up during the night by Br.-General Ruggles-Brise in expectation of the coming attack. The 1/Coldstream was very weak—only about three hundred and fifty strong—too few indeed to hold the front assigned to it, some fifteen hundred yards from the Gheluvelt cross roads northward, and east of the road to Poezelhoek and Becelaere. A company of the 1/Black Watch, of the same brigade, had therefore been sent up on the 27th to reinforce it, and had been placed on the right to hold the cross Map 23.  
Sketch 9.



roads. During the night Br.-General FitzClarence further strengthened his line by a second company of the same battalion, posted on the left of the 1/Coldstream, between the latter and the 1/Scots Guards. The company was, however, insufficient in numbers to fill the gap—where there was a thick wood on both sides of the road—so that a space of about two hundred yards still remained between its left and the first detached post of the Scots Guards.<sup>1</sup> A platoon of the 1/Gloucestershire (3rd Brigade, but at the disposal of the G.O.C. 1st Brigade), with the machine-gun section, was also sent up; one gun, with one of the Coldstream guns, was placed close to the road, the other being in position about two hundred yards north of the road. Of the platoon of the Gloucestershire, one section was south of the road; the rest of it was distributed among the Coldstream to fill gaps, the largest party left together being 15 men. Thus the line near the cross roads was by no means so homogeneous as would at first appear.<sup>2</sup> The trenches near the road had originally, whilst Kruseecka was in British hands, been dug as support trenches and, as usual at that period, were deep and narrow. They were without traverses and had the disadvantage of overhead cover—planks with earth over them for most of their length—useful under the conditions which prevailed in Manchuria in 1904–5, but an additional danger instead of a protection against high-explosive shells. As elsewhere near Ypres at the time, the trenches were, almost without exception, dug in short lengths separated by considerable intervals; but the two left companies of the 1/Coldstream, little more than the establishment of half a company in numbers, were in one continuous trench. There were no communication trenches and no dug-outs, and the ground was too battered to permit of the latter being excavated, even had there been men and material available for their construction. There was wire—or rather a wire—in front of the trenches: a single plain strand, with tins containing pebbles slung on it, South-African fashion, to serve as alarms.

The line taken up north of the Menin road was the best available, but Sir Douglas Haig was by no means satisfied with the 7th Division trenches south of it. They

<sup>1</sup> The other two companies of the 1/Black Watch were on the extreme left of the 1st (Guards) Brigade beyond the 1/Cameron Highlanders.

<sup>2</sup> The machine-gun section of the 1/South Wales Borderers was also sent up by General FitzClarence. It was never heard of again.

were much exposed, and he sent up his Chief Engineer to see if a better line could not be found. Starting at day-break on this 29th October Br.-General Rice walked down the line from left to right, with General Capper. The obvious course was to leave the trenches as dummies and construct a better-sited line in rear; but the enemy's action very soon put a stop to such considerations. To find a better line was no easy task. In any very long continuous front there were bound to be weak places, and the ground was not bare and desolate as it was later in the war, but covered with cottages, trees, hedges and gardens. Thus even when standing up on the ground level a man usually obtained but a limited view, and from a trench had practically none. This lack of view, among other disadvantages, made artillery support very difficult, even when there were observers in the front line; and it accounts for the fact that when a mishap occurred, the troops on either side of those concerned remained for hours in ignorance of it.

### I. CORPS : THE FIRST GERMAN ATTACK

The morning of the 29th October was very foggy, but punctually at 5.30 A.M. the Germans began their attack, not south as expected, but on and just north of the Menin road. Three battalions of the *16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment*<sup>1</sup> pushing on in lines of skirmishers, followed by closed bodies—in fours, it is said—attacked the front of the company of the Black Watch on the road and the two weak companies of the Coldstream next to it. Although the Bavarians got within fifty yards without being seen, they were held off for a little time by fire; but, though young troops in action for the first time, they persisted. At least two of the British machine guns near the road are known to have jammed, and even British rifle fire slackened from time to time, for the cases of a number of cartridges were found too large for the rifles, and this defect greatly contributed to the disasters of the day.<sup>2</sup> Eventually some Germans broke in near the road

Maps  
23, 24.  
Sketch 9.

<sup>1</sup> Of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, which was raised at the same time and in the same way as the divisions of the *XXII.-XXVII. Reserve Corps*, but was not allotted to a corps until the *48th Reserve Division* was brought up from the Woëvre, when it was united to that division to form the composite *XXIV. Reserve Corps*.

<sup>2</sup> Other parts of the line reported that as many as 50 per cent of the cartridges were like this, and that others—whose cases were too thin—could not be extracted except by kicking the bolt. It was difficult to

and then, turning northwards, rolled up the company of the Black Watch and the two right companies of the Coldstream, party by party, from the right and the right rear; and by 6.30 A.M. they had captured most of them and occupied their trenches. No artillery support had been given to the 1st Brigade this morning. Only some nine rounds per gun were available, and instructions had been given that if the German attack should materialize, fire was to be directed on the enemy's artillery rather than on his infantry.<sup>1</sup> Later in the day the artillery of both the 1st and 7th Divisions concentrated fire on the Gheluvelt area,<sup>2</sup> got the better of the German guns, and did much to prevent the enemy infantry from coming on.

The other two companies, No. 3 and Left Flank, of the 1/Coldstream, further to the left and separated from the rest of the battalion by a considerable gap, and the second company of the Black Watch with them, were also attacked at 5.30 A.M. The Germans—apparently of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*—charged three times with great determination, but with entire lack of success. As it got lighter there was no difficulty in dealing with them in spite of defective cartridges, and although their artillery fire was heavy and continuous, and that of the British, due to shortage of ammunition, weak and spasmodic. Soon after 6 A.M. German helmets were seen in the trenches of the right half-battalion of the 1/Coldstream, and it was obvious that it was in difficulties if not annihilated. In order to deal with the Germans who had penetrated into the gap, Captain J. E. Gibbs, commanding No. 3 Company, the next to the northwards, ordered part of his men to turn about and shoot towards their right rear. He then sent others to form a flank, a little in front of the edge of the wood, west of the *Kruiseecke—Beelaere* road. But for the moment the enemy paused and did not come on.

News of the break in the line came back slowly, for only in rare instances at this period was there any telephone communication in front of brigade headquarters. The first report was apparently brought to Br.-General Fitz-Clarence by a wounded officer shortly before 7 A.M. Thereupon, still having the 1/Gloucestershire (3rd Brigade) at

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keep the weapons clean, as rifle oil was unprocurable, and the trenches deep in mud.

British prisoners were subsequently told that there was no resistance on the road itself.

<sup>1</sup> Diary of the XXVI. Brigade R.F.A.

<sup>2</sup> Except two batteries of the XXV. Brigade, supporting Lord Cavan.



his disposal, a quarter of a mile west of Gheluvelt, which 29 Oct. was a small village of 1,600 inhabitants, he ordered this battalion to advance, check the German assault, and recover the trenches lost near the Gheluvelt cross roads. Being impressed that speed was all-important, Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Lovett sent forward three companies independently. Arrived within three hundred yards of the cross roads, one company of the Gloucestershire rallied the survivors of the first onslaught, but was then itself attacked from the north-east, and the men faced along the main road and a ditch at right angles to it. Another company joined the 1/Scots Guards and shared with it the fortunes of the day. The third, after losing its commander, pushed on between the two others, and the men got into the firing line where they could. When the fourth company arrived, it was sent south of the main road. After advancing some half a mile beyond Gheluvelt, this company found the first in trouble, and with it was forced back some three hundred yards by weight of numbers; but, as the Germans were in close formation, the losses inflicted on them by the Gloucestershire were heavy.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the 1/Grenadier Guards, south of the cross roads, in trenches on lower ground and cut off from view of the Menin road by intervening houses and gardens, heard nothing, and, in the fog, could see nothing of the disaster that had befallen their comrades in the Coldstream, and the battalion itself had not been attacked. By 6.45 A.M. the warning of the intended enemy offensive was deemed a false alarm. Br.-General Ruggles-Brise soon after decided to send back into reserve the 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border Regiment, which had been hurried up during the night in support of the Grenadiers in view of the expected attack; for to leave them where they stood would expose them to artillery fire as soon as it was light. The two battalions had hardly been gone half an hour when, about 7.30 A.M., the enemy opened a very heavy bombardment on the Grenadiers; and in the fog, which was thinning but still hanging about, swept down "in crowds" on their front and left flank. It was close-quarter fighting, and soon the supports had to face the rear to engage Germans who had broken through. The battalion was gradually forced back westwards; but the survivors, assisted by the

<sup>1</sup> When the 1/Gloucestershire was relieved and reassembled at night at its starting place, its casualties were found to be 7 officers (3 killed) and 160 other ranks.



2/Gordons, actually made two counter-attacks to regain the lost ground. The enemy numbers, however, proved overwhelming, and eventually the Grenadiers were compelled to retire and occupy a ditch south of the Menin road east of Gheluvelt, where the fourth company of the Gloucestershire, after being driven back, had now arrived. Here they were joined later on by the 2/Border Regiment, which again came up from brigade reserve. Further German advance in this quarter was checked and, though repeatedly attacked, the Grenadiers remained in their new position throughout the day. The losses of the battalion were very heavy. Lieut.-Colonel M. Earle, the commanding officer, was wounded and fell into the hands of the enemy, and 11 other officers were killed and 8 wounded. At night, the battalion mustered only 5 officers and under two hundred men: it had lost 470.

The 2/Gordon Highlanders on the right of the Grenadiers was only attacked in front and held its trenches all day at a cost of about a hundred casualties, whilst over two hundred and forty German dead were counted at night in front of one platoon alone.<sup>1</sup> The 21st Brigade on the right of the Gordons also held its own.

In the early morning heavy firing had been heard at corps and divisional headquarters, but it had died away again, and no special alarm was felt. The news that at first came back to the 1st and 7th Division headquarters was by no means unsatisfactory: the 1st Brigade reported to General Lomax that, after being reinforced by the Gloucestershire, it was holding its own, and on other parts of the front all was well. Only at 10.15 A.M. did General Capper hear that the 1/Grenadier Guards had been forced out of the line.

The first precaution taken by the 1st Division, about 7 A.M., had been to draw forward the 2/Welch (3rd Brigade) to the supporting position previously occupied by the 1/Gloucestershire behind Gheluvelt; but at 9.30 A.M. General Lomax, after an interview with Br.-General Ruggles-Brise, decided to restore the situation at the cross roads by a counter-attack with it and the two remaining battalions of the 3rd Brigade, which had been moved forward early to the woods behind Veldhoek. Major-

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. J. A. O. Brooke, 2/Gordon Highlanders, was posthumously awarded the V.C. for leading two counter-attacks (of the Gordon reserves in co-operation with the Grenadiers) under heavy fire, and regaining a lost (Grenadier) trench at a very critical moment, and preventing a breakthrough. He was killed later in the day.

General Landon therefore sent the 1/Queen's towards Gheluvelt, south of the Menin road, and the 1/South Wales Borderers north of it. The 2/Welch, having already gone on, joined in between them about 11 A.M. as the advance reached it. The prospect was not encouraging, for as the battalions went forward they encountered large numbers of wounded and stragglers of different units drifting down the Gheluvelt—Menin road. The first instructions issued after the 3rd Brigade got into touch with the 1st Brigade were for it to assist in the defence of Gheluvelt and retake the trenches lost by the Coldstream and Black Watch. 29 Oct.

### I. CORPS : THE FURTHER GERMAN ATTACKS AND THE COUNTER-ATTACK

It was not until soon after 10 A.M. that the enemy seemed to discover the advantage that he had gained; he then widened his front of attack so as to include all the ground held by the 7th and 1st Divisions and the right of the 2nd; but he did not employ sufficient troops to obtain any marked advantage. Simultaneously British reinforcements commenced to appear, and gradually the battle became general on both sides. On the British right, in the 7th Division, the 2/Scots Guards (reserve of the 20th Brigade) and the 2/Queen's (22nd Brigade, but in divisional reserve), were sent up to counter-attack and recover the ground lost by the 1/Grenadier Guards; in the centre, as we have seen, three battalions of the 3rd Brigade were approaching Gheluvelt; on the left the 5th and 6th Brigades of the 2nd Division were, in accordance with original orders, beginning to attack in conjunction with the French. Maps  
23, 24.  
Sketch 9.

Before the advance of the five battalions of the 3rd, 20th and 22nd Brigades could restore the situation in the 7th Division, further misfortune befell the 1st (Guards) Brigade. The two right companies of the 1/Coldstream, and one of the Black Watch with them, had already been overwhelmed; now, at some time soon after 10 A.M., in spite of the precautions taken to cover their exposed flank, the same fate overtook the left half-battalion and the other Black Watch company with it. Attacked in flank and rear at close range by the Germans who had penetrated near the Menin road—probably also by some who had come through the wood between the Black Watch and the Scots Guards detached post north of it—and shelled and fired on in front, the three hundred Guardsmen and

Highlanders were killed or captured almost to a man. The total loss of the 1/Coldstream for the day was 10 officers and 180 men, so that at night the battalion—apart from the fifty transport men and cooks left in billets—mustered only eighty men under the quartermaster.<sup>1</sup> The casualties of the Black Watch, which occurred almost entirely in the two companies with the Coldstream, amounted to 5 officers and 250 men.

The effects of this second disaster spread northwards to the right of the 1/Scots Guards, whose trenches were next to the Coldstream, and attempts were made by the enemy, mainly from the rear, to surround this battalion also. It was difficult, with bullets coming from every direction and fog still hanging about, to decide where the greatest danger lay. Towards the rear there was, however, no special protection, and the battalion staff had been put off their guard by the receipt of a message :

“on no account fire through the wood in rear I am coming to your assistance with the Black Watch [signed, “what appeared to be] Murray B.W.”

This message would seem to have been an enemy ruse.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the greater part of the Scots Guards held their ground, although portions of the two right companies, in trenches isolated by considerable distances one from the other, were overwhelmed and captured, after expending all their ammunition. No reinforcements appeared, but by bringing men from the left and collecting stragglers, the Germans who were in the Scots Guards' trenches were expelled and the front was restored. The losses of the 1/Scots Guards on this day amounted to 8 officers and 336 other ranks.

These successes marked the high tide of the German efforts near Gheluveld on the 29th October; a single attack made against the left of the 1st Brigade—two companies of the Black Watch and the Camerons—completely failed; but two and a half battalions on its right wing and the 1/Grenadier Guards of the 20th Brigade next them, had suffered grievous loss in trained officers and men, who could by no possibility be replaced.

<sup>1</sup> 60 men, who managed to join the 1/Scots Guards, returned next day.

<sup>2</sup> The war diary of the 1/Black Watch for these days is missing. Major J. T. C. Murray, who died of wounds in February 1915, was at the time commanding the battalion. His name might have been obtained by the enemy from prisoners taken at the cross roads. No brigade orders were given for the two companies of the Black Watch in the line near Reutel to leave their position. The other two companies had been annihilated.



The enemy attacks were by no means ended. Now, a 29 Oct. little late perhaps to assist the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* fighting in front of Gheluvelt, the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* on its right, which had co-operated with it in the first onslaught, began to show signs of a very serious forward movement. Had this been made earlier, it might have led to the capture of the whole of the 1st Brigade.

Towards 11.30 A.M. several reports came in to I. Corps headquarters that Germans were massing in and near Poezelhoek Chateau, that is opposite the centre of the 1st Brigade where the 1/Scots Guards and the 1/Cameron Highlanders had hitherto repulsed all attacks. Lord Cavan (4th Brigade), who was nearest, immediately sent two companies of the 2/Grenadier Guards, his brigade reserve, to support the Camerons; at 12 noon the I. Corps ordered General Monro to move all available troops of the 2nd Division to meet the threatened onslaught; and the 1st Division sent up the 23rd and 26th Field Companies R.E. to Gheluvelt, to place what remained of the village and the ground near it in a state of defence. A little later General Haig directed General Bulfin to take two battalions of the 2nd Brigade, his corps reserve—which had been moved up to Veldhoek—and increase the front of General Landon's counter-attack by deploying on the left of the 3rd Brigade north-east of Gheluvelt. General Bulfin led up the 1/Loyal North Lancashire and 2/K.R.R.C., but, finding that General Landon only had three battalions, placed them under Lieut.-Colonel E. Pearee Serocold of the K.R.R.C., the senior battalion commander, and handed them over to him. Thus the G.O.C. 3rd Brigade had five battalions under his command for the counter-attack, apart from the 2/Scots Guards and 2/Queen's contributed by the 7th Division.

In the 2nd Division, General Monro, in obedience to the instructions to send all units he could spare, divided his troops into three groups. The first, under Br.-General R. Fanshawe consisted of that general's own brigade (6th) and the two battalions of the 5th (2/Connaught Rangers and 2/Highland L.I.) which were already deployed for attack in combination with the French. This group was directed to take over the whole of the original front of the 5th and 6th Brigades and hold it at all costs. The second group, consisting of the 2/Coldstream and 3/Coldstream under Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Pereira, on the eastern edge of Polygon Wood, was also to hold on. The four remaining



battalions—2/Grenadiers, Irish Guards, 2/Oxfordshire and 2/Worcestershire—he assembled in divisional reserve behind Polygon Wood, under Lord Cavan, and directed the latter to send one battalion—the Irish Guards was selected—to the assistance of the 1st Brigade. Towards 2 P.M. General Monro withdrew the 1/King's from Fanshawe's group and added it to his divisional reserve in place of the Irish Guards.

The counter-attack made by General Landon—with the special support of the XIV. Brigade R.H.A. and the XXVI. Brigade R.F.A.—with the three battalions of the 3rd Brigade, assisted by the detachment of the 1/Gloucestershire which was still holding out in front of Gheluvelt, and by the Irish Guards, and eventually joined by Colonel Pearce Serocold's two battalions, at first made good progress, though the troops were "deluged" with shrapnel. A forward line covering and including Gheluvelt was secured. By a curious chance, the 1/Queen's of the 3rd Brigade found itself alongside its own second battalion belonging to the 22nd Brigade, now, in place of the 1/Grenadier Guards, on the left of the 7th Division. The two reserve battalions of the 20th Brigade, 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border Regiment, moved to counter-attack between the 2/Gordon Highlanders and 2/Queen's, but not straight to their front. They were given orders to advance north-eastward and come in on the side of the salient which the Germans held as a result of their first successes. This attempt at envelopment had no success, the battalions found Germans on their right flank entrenched on a north and south line through Gheluvelt cross roads, and, coming under heavy enfilade artillery fire from the north, were early brought to a standstill. A further attempt of part of General Landon's force on the left, and of the Green Howards and Bedfords of the 21st Brigade on the right, also failed to gain ground. About 4 P.M. a hurried conference was held near Gheluvelt Chateau by General Landon with the five battalion commanders and the artillery commanders present; and it was decided, in view of the small numbers available and complete lack of supports and reserves, the late hour, and the failing light, that it would be folly to continue the counter-attack. Generals Bulfin and FitzClarence came up at this juncture, and, after consultation with them, orders were issued to take up a line and dig in.

Though all the trenches held in the morning, except some five hundred yards at the cross roads, had been

recovered, the 29th October had been an unlucky day. 29 Oct. In spite of the warning of the German attack, owing to the fog and the jamming of rifles, heavy casualties—for the numbers engaged—had been incurred without any compensating advantage having been obtained. It was a bad preparation for the desperate struggle that was to follow. The only consoling feature for the fighting troops was that they could see they had inflicted great loss on the enemy. The British misfortunes were not even at an end when at dusk heavy rain came down and the combat ceased; for in the counter-attack of the 20th Brigade, the 2/Scots Guards advanced further than the rest of the line, and, whilst being withdrawn, were shot into by troops behind them, who mistook them for the enemy. The battalion lost 31 killed and 104 wounded.

As a result of the hasty reinforcing of the line during the day, units were now much mixed up, and sorting and reorganization went on for long after dark. And there was other work to be done. A new line of trenches, roughly north and south through the 8th kilometre-stone, opposite the cross roads captured by the enemy, and half a mile from them, had to be dug during the night, and the line re-allotted; entrenching tools were scarce and time was lost in trying to find more locally; so there was little rest for the severely-tried troops. Even the hardest-hit battalions, which were withdrawn into reserve, did not reach their resting places until midnight, and some were later.

At night the right of the line of the 7th Division was held by the 1/Welch Fusiliers (22nd Brigade), connecting with the Cavalry Corps next to it. In succession came the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers<sup>1</sup> and the 2/Green Howards of the 21st Brigade, and the 2/Queen's (22nd). The 2/Bedfordshire (21st) was in support, and the other two battalions of the 22nd were in divisional reserve at Zandvoorde. The survivors of the 20th Brigade and of the 2/Wiltshire went back into corps reserve near Veldhoek.

The 1st Division sent back the 1/Coldstream and one company of the 1/Scots Guards to reorganize, but still kept in the line the other survivors of the 1st Brigade. On its right, between it and the 7th Division, were three battalions of the 3rd Brigade. In divisional reserve were the 1/Gloucestershire (3rd) and two battalions of the 2nd Brigade, the other two still being in corps reserve.

<sup>1</sup> On Map 24 the position of these two battalions should be as stated in the text.

The 2nd Division maintained six battalions—two of each brigade—in the line; four behind the centre; and the remaining two of the 4th Brigade behind the 1st Division.

Thus, instead of having four complete infantry brigades in reserve as he had in the morning, General Haig had now under his hand not even one intact, unless we count as such the sorely hit 20th Brigade. This brigade and the two battalions of the 2nd Brigade and the 2/Wiltshire, formed the sole corps reserve to his three divisions, and there was hardly a battalion of them that had not suffered heavy losses, some—like the 2/Wiltshire, 2/Border Regiment, 2/Scots Guards, 1/South Staffordshire, 1/Grenadiers, 1/Coldstream and 1/Black Watch—very heavy losses.

As a result of the fighting on the 29th Generals Lomax and Monro agreed that, should the 1st Division front be broken in the vicinity of Gheluvelt, the 2nd Division could best render assistance by launching a counter-attack southwards from Polygon Wood—behind which the 2nd Division reserves were placed—against the right flank of the attacking Germans. This personal agreement made at Hooze Chateau on the evening of the 29th October formed, with Sir Douglas Haig's approval, the common policy of the two divisions during the remainder of the Battles of Ypres.

#### THE CAVALRY CORPS

Map 24.  
Sketch 9.

The Cavalry Corps, on the right of the I. Corps, was not seriously pressed on the 29th October, although the enemy cavalry divisions opposite it endeavoured to push in and secure certain farm buildings on its front. The methods of the German cavalry on this and the two or three following days were very deliberate. During the night small parties advanced and entrenched in various small farms and enclosures, which were turned into strong points; then next night a further advance was made. Thus ground was slowly gained. To dislodge the Germans from these bases one section of old 6-inch howitzers was sent up by G.H.Q. to General Allenby: it was naturally insufficient to deal with the situation.

The left, the 3rd Cavalry Division, had been ordered to co-operate in the general advance of the I. Corps, but stood fast as this did not take place. About noon, in consequence of the enemy's success, General Byng was



asked by the I. Corps to push his reserve from Zandvoorde 29 Oct. towards Kruiseecke to support the counter-attack. In reporting this to General Allenby he suggested that the Cavalry Corps reserves should be moved to Klein Zillebeke in order to be nearer the threatened point. A detachment from the 2nd Cavalry Division consisting of 5 squadrons, a section R.H.A., and half a battalion, was in consequence sent to report to the G.O.C. I. Corps; but its services were not required and it was returned in the evening. At night the position of the Cavalry Corps was the same as in the morning. By this time the line was fairly dug in, but there was very little wire up, and such as there was had been taken from the fencing of the farms near.

On the right of the Cavalry Corps, the 4th Division successfully repelled all attacks, including a specially sharp one on Le Gheer.<sup>1</sup>

#### GENERAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH ON THE NIGHT OF THE 29TH/30TH OCTOBER

The general situation of the I. Corps on the evening of the 29th was thus the same as on the previous day, except that the corps, divisional and brigade reserves had fallen from 16 battalions to 12, and Gheluveld cross roads and five hundred yards of trenches near had been lost. These localities, however, gave the enemy a very advantageous position on the Kruiseecke—Gheluveld spur; for, as there was a dip in the ground at the cross roads, an infantry attack from them against Gheluveld could be perfectly supported by concealed artillery with its observers on the high ground commanding a view of the advance. Map 24.  
Sketch 9.

On the left of the British, General Dubois during the 29th had continued his attacks with his three divisions, the 17th, 18th and 31st. During the morning they made only some slight gain of ground, and at 2 P.M. a message was received from General d'Urbal urging more vigorous action. But, as General Dubois writes, "All efforts were in vain. The attacks were powerless to move an enemy who was so numerically strong and so well entrenched, and whose heavy artillery became day after day unceasingly stronger."<sup>2</sup>

North of the French IX. Corps, the 3rd Dragoon Brigade of de Mitry's detachment captured Bixschoote

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VIII.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 42.



and Kortekeer Cabaret, the enemy abandoning some five hundred killed and wounded.<sup>1</sup>

From midnight on the 28th/29th onwards, deliberate bombardment of the town of Ypres was begun, although there were no troops in it except General Dubois's headquarters and the 2nd Echelon of the I. Corps staff. Five aeroplane bombs were also dropped on the town, and one of them fell on a hospital.

Sketch 6. On the Belgian front, the German attack on Dixmude slackened, owing to lack of ammunition, according to German accounts; but north of this town the troops of the *III. Reserve Corps* and *44th Reserve Division* continued to press on, although very slowly. The inundation was already visible near Nieuport and was gaining ground southwards.<sup>2</sup>

General Foch, whom Sir John French saw during this day, informed the Field-Marshal that the advance of all French troops from the British left to the sea had satisfied him, but he was far from well-informed as to their doings.

Owing first to fog and later to clouds, no information of interest was obtained from the air; but the reports received tended to show that there were no important movements of German troops in progress.

Sir John French therefore issued orders<sup>3</sup> for the advance to be continued on the 30th. He was not dissatisfied with the result of the counter-attack, and at 7.55 P.M. telegraphed to that effect to Lord Kitchener. He added that he was led to believe by all his information that "so far as the present situation is concerned, if the success can be followed up, it will lead to a decisive result". In reporting the capture of Bixschoote by the French, he said, "although the enemy's resistance is very stubborn, slow but decided success is being made everywhere".

For the purpose of following up his success he was, as we know,<sup>4</sup> taking measures to make the II. Corps available by bringing it out of the line near La Bassée. It was on the night of the 29th/30th that its relief by the Indian Corps was begun. But the only troops that were at the moment in hand were the London Scottish, who arrived at Ypres about midnight.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> d'Urbal, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> "Military Operations of Belgium", p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 38.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 221.

<sup>5</sup> A telegram next day from Lord Kitchener informed Sir John French that the North Somerset and Leicestershire Yeomanry, the Warwickshire

## NOTE

## GERMAN FORCES ENGAGED ON 29TH OCTOBER NEAR GHELUVELT

Prisoners taken stated that the leading formation in the first **Map 24.** attack on the cross roads was the *12th Bavarian Reserve Brigade* of **Sketch 9.** the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, whose arrival in Flanders has already been noticed.<sup>1</sup> The German official account<sup>2</sup> states that the left wing of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps (54th Reserve Division)* took a prominent part with the *16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment* of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* on its left. The Bavarian official account of the war, which has recently appeared, says of the 29th October that the *16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment* took part in the fighting of the *54th Reserve Division* at Gheluvelt "under unfavourable conditions and with heavy losses".<sup>3</sup> The *IV. Cavalry Corps (3rd, 6th and Bavarian Cavalry Division* and Petersen's *Jäger Battalions, 4, 9 and 10)* under General von Stetten, according to the same authority, also co-operated, and is stated to have taken six hundred British prisoners and 5 machine guns. The cavalry narrative,<sup>4</sup> however, though it mentions the *IV. Cavalry Corps* as being engaged, claims no success, and gives the credit for four hundred prisoners and 5 machine guns to the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, as also for the capture of the cross roads. The official list of battles<sup>5</sup> shows both divisions of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, also the *11th Landwehr Brigade*, engaged at Kruiseecke and Gheluvelt on this date; and the *52nd Reserve Division* with the *37th and 38th Landwehr Brigades* near Broodseinde, that is opposite the junction of the 2nd Division with the French IX. Corps. Therefore it would seem that opposite the three divisions of the I. Corps were not less than the equivalent of four and a half German divisions, three cavalry divisions, and a *Jäger* brigade—mainly concentrated on the front of the 1st and 7th Divisions. And the enemy had overwhelming superiority of artillery.

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Battery R.H.A., and 6 Territorial Force battalions were on the way, or about to leave, and on the 31st October he notified that 6 more selected Territorial Force battalions would be sent. The London Scottish had come to France in September as L. of C. Troops.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> "Bavaria", p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", pp. 57-8.

<sup>4</sup> Poseck, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> "S. und G.", p. 54. This compilation does not always enumerate all formations present.

## CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. THE BATTLE OF  
GHELUVELT <sup>1</sup> (*continued*)

THE SECOND DAY. 30TH OCTOBER 1914

THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S *ARMY GROUP* AND LOSS  
OF ZANDVOORDE AND HOLLEBEKE

(Maps 1, 2, 24, 25; Sketches A, 9, 10)

### THE EVE OF FABECK'S ATTACK

Maps  
24, 25.  
Sketch  
10.

ON the morning of the 30th October the Allied commanders in the north were still totally unaware of the massing of important enemy reinforcements opposite, strategically, the most important, and, tactically, the weakest portion of the line near Ypres. The night of the 29th/30th had been fairly quiet; the troops in the front trenches reported sounds of an unusual amount of moving vehicles and trotting horses, but the direction of the movement could not be ascertained with any certainty. Some officers thought it was from north to south, others from south-west to north-east. In one cavalry division, it was concluded, in consequence of the optimistic information that had been circulated, that the enemy was retiring; so the divisional transport and horses were moved forward, and the horse artillery was ordered to be hooked in at dawn, ready for a pursuit as soon as it was light.

As the French IX. Corps had gained a small success <sup>2</sup> during the night—two regiments advancing about two hundred yards—neither General d'Urbal nor Sir John French saw any occasion to change his orders, issued on

<sup>1</sup> This includes part of the Battle of Armentières and the Battle of Messines as pointed out in Chapter VIII.

<sup>2</sup> Palat, viii. p. 182.





# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

SKETCH 10.

30<sup>TH</sup> & 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 1914.



the evening of the 29th,<sup>1</sup> for the continuation of the offensive on the same lines as before. General Dubois (IX. Corps) ordered his left, the 31st Division (General Vidal), reinforced by Hély d'Oïssel's detachment—a division of cavalry and six battalions—to secure Poelcappelle, and his 17th and 18th Divisions to push forward as best they could.<sup>2</sup> 30 Oct.

General Haig's orders exhibited more caution. He directed his three divisions to entrench in favourable positions on the ground they held, to reorganize, and to carry on active reconnaissance during the night and early morning. He added: "orders as to the resumption of the offensive will be issued in the morning when the situation is clearer than it is at present".

Much work was in consequence done during the night on improving defences; and it was fully worth the labour and loss of sleep that it cost the men. On the 2nd Division front, which had not changed, there was opportunity to put up some barbed wire; but on the rest of the I. Corps front, owing to the disorganization consequent on the day's fighting, the fatigue of the men and the lack of material, little could be done except to dig new fire trenches where they were most urgently required.

In many ways the 30th October was to resemble the 29th. The Germans managed to penetrate the British line at one place and then tried to enlarge their gains; and the British commanders had perforce to conform to the enemy's moves and to employ what small reserves they had at their disposal to stop the gap. To use an expression current at the time, they could do no more than "putty up" the front, "*boucher le trou*" as General Foch translated it. A counter-stroke from Polygon Wood southwards, the most effective reply, was kept as the last resort should the Germans actually break through. Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.

The British line was already all too thin; it was, indeed, little stronger in places than an outpost system. From the left of the 4th Division (of the III. Corps)—which defended a front of some eight miles covering Armentières and past Ploegsteert Wood to the Douve stream—the three cavalry divisions of the Cavalry Corps, supported by two Indian battalions—the 57th Rifles and 129th Baluchis—held a front of six miles, as the crow flies, but actually nearly nine miles long, up to and including Zandvoorde. The squadrons did not average more than

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 38.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 45-6.

eighty rifles, so that the total effective force of the Cavalry Corps, reckoning in the Indian troops, did not furnish a thousand rifles per mile, including supports and reserves. The cavalymen, in fact, scattered in small parties along the front, were almost invisible on account of their small numbers amid the houses, trees, hedges and gardens of Wytshaete, Messines and Hollebeke. They had no more artillery support than their horse artillery batteries and one section of old 6-inch howitzers could furnish. With a view to eventualities, General Allenby at 8 A.M. on the 30th assembled at Klein Zillebeke a special corps reserve of one regiment from each brigade of the 2nd Cavalry Division, and a horse artillery battery, under Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Bulkeley-Johnson of the Greys.<sup>1</sup>

The 1st Cavalry Division (Major-General de Lisle), on the right of the Cavalry Corps, from the Douve up to and including Messines, had the 1st Cavalry Brigade in the trenches and the 2nd in reserve. Next to it, the 2nd Cavalry Division (Major-General H. Gough) had all three brigades in the line, which ran from the outskirts of Messines to the Comines—Ypres road and in front of Hollebeke. The 4th Cavalry Brigade was on the right, the 5th in the centre and the 3rd on the left. Beyond the canal up to and including Zandvoorde village—which stands on a well-marked low ridge, separated from the main ridge at Klein Zillebeke by the Basseville stream—was the 3rd Cavalry Division (Major-General Hon. Julian Byng). On the right one squadron of the Royals (6th Cavalry Brigade) held Hollebeke Chateau (east of the canal); the 7th Cavalry Brigade (Br.-General Kavanagh) held the rest of the front, with the Royal Horse Guards and the 2nd and 1st Life Guards. The remainder of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, which still consisted of only two regiments, was in divisional reserve at Klein Zillebeke.

Next to the Cavalry Corps came the 1/Welch Fusiliers (22nd Brigade), with the 2/Scots Fusiliers and 2/Green Howards of the 21st Brigade beyond it; and then the rest of the 7th Division and the 1st and 2nd Divisions.<sup>2</sup> The three divisions of the I. Corps covered, between them, a front of some seven and a half miles.

<sup>1</sup> Killed as a brigadier-general at Monchy le Preux 11.4.17.

<sup>2</sup> As shown on Map 24 and Sketch 9.



30 Oct.

## THE GERMAN DISPOSITIONS

The difficulties and dangers about to be encountered by the Cavalry Corps and I. Corps will be more evident, if at this stage the enemy's forces, objectives and dispositions are described. These furnish the clue to the operations; for the British movements on the 30th October and succeeding days were entirely dependent on those of the enemy. It must, however, be borne in mind that this knowledge of the enemy forces and the enemy plan was not in possession of the Allied leaders. On the evening of the 30th the plan could be no more than guessed at; only on the 31st did intelligence of the arrival of fresh German formations reach Sir John French. He was just as much in the dark as Napoleon on the eve of Jena, or Moltke on the morning of the battle of Gravelotte. The G.H.Q. Intelligence Summaries and the I. Corps map for the 30th and 31st show the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, four cavalry corps, and the *XV. Corps*, that is 5 divisions and 8 cavalry divisions, opposite the British  $3\frac{1}{2}$  divisions and 3 cavalry divisions north of the Lys—a sufficiently unfavourable situation; the five new divisions of Fabeck's *Army Group* do not appear in them until the 1st November, and intelligence of them was obtained, as the bulk of intelligence always must be, by the fighting troops through capture of prisoners. It was impossible, even when the weather was favourable, for the Flying Corps to report the presence of troops which moved only by night and hid in towns and villages during the day; and as there was no longer an open flank intelligence agents had, for the moment, no means for forwarding their reports. The following information is now available:—

During the night of the 29th/30th the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* and the two northernmost of the German cavalry corps, the formations which were opposite Messines—Gheluvelt, were relieved by Fabeck's *Army Group*<sup>1</sup> and pulled out of the line into reserve. Without any help from camouflage, the use of which was sometimes suspected in similar operations of a later date, five fresh infantry divisions were brought up unseen within a few hundred yards of the British front. Fabeck's numerous heavy artillery—two hundred and sixty super-heavy and heavy guns—was already in position and had ranged during the 29th.

<sup>1</sup> See page 259 and "Ypres", pp. 67-70, and Poseck, p. 197.

Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.



The importance attached by the German commanders to the operations about to commence may be judged from the following translation of part of an Order of the Day, issued on the 29th October and found on a dead officer of the *XV. Corps* next day: "The break-through will be "of decisive importance. We must and will therefore "conquer, settle for ever with the centuries-long struggle, "end the war, and strike the decisive blow against our most "detested enemy. We will finish with the British, Indians, "Canadians, Moroccans, and other trash, feeble adversaries, "who surrender in great numbers if they are attacked "with vigour."

The German operation orders directed that an offensive should be carried out all along the line, but that the main effort should be made by Fabeck's *Army Group* against the British front south-east of Ypres. The first objectives were to be Zandvoorde and Messines ridge, with the object of breaking through to the Kemmel heights,<sup>1</sup> cutting off all the Allied troops in and north of Ypres, and driving them either against the coast or into Netherlands territory. A special subsidiary attack was to be carried out an hour earlier by the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, against the junction of the French and British near Zonnebeke, with the object of drawing reserves in that direction. Little did the Supreme Command imagine that it would be three and a half years before the Germans would be in possession of Kemmel, and then would wrest it not from the British but from the French.

### THE OPPOSING FORCES

Maps 1,  
25.  
Sketch  
10.

The comparative distribution of the opposing forces on the Flanders front on the morning of the 30th October can best be seen by setting it forth in tabular form, commencing from the sea :—

<i>Allies.</i>	<i>German.</i>
Belgian Army	<i>Fourth Army :</i> <i>Marine Division</i> (part of) <i>III. Reserve Corps</i> (3 divs.)
Humbert's Detachment (French): 38th and 42nd Divs. ; Naval Brigade ; 89th Terr. Div. ; Cavalry Brigade.	
	<i>Nieupoort to Dix-</i> <i>mude (exclu-</i> <i>sive).</i> }
	<i>Opposite</i> <i>Dix-</i> <i>mude</i> } <i>XXII. Reserve Corps</i>

<sup>1</sup> " Fusilier Regiment No. 122 ", p. 39.

<i>Allies.</i>	<i>Opposing Forces.</i>	<i>German.</i>	30 Oct.
de Mitry's Detachment (French): 87th Terr. Division; 4th and 5th Cav. Divs.	From near Dix- mude to near Langemarck	XXIII. Reserve Corps	
Dubois' IX. Corps (French): 17th, 18th and 31st Divisions; 6th Cavalry Div.	Opposite Lange- marck	XXVI. Reserve Corps: Right wing	
	Langemarck to Zonnebeke.	Centre and left	
	Assisting both XXVI. and XXVII. Re- serve Corps.	{ 2nd Ersatz Brigade 37th and 38th Landwehr Brigades Marine Div. (part of)	
British 2nd Division; " 1st Division.	{ Zonnebeke to near Ghelu- velt	XXVII. Reserve Corps: Right wing	
	{ Gheluvclt, north of and includ- ing Menin road.	Centre and left wing	
" 7th Division	Menin road to Zandvoorde (inclusive).	Fabeck's Army Group: XV. Corps.	
" cavalry regiment of 7th Cavalry Brigade		1st, 4th and 10th Jäger Battalions	
" 3rd Cavalry Divi- sion (less a regi- ment)	Zandvoorde (ex- clusive) to Wambeke (ex- clusive)	II. Bavarian Corps	
" 2nd Cavalry Divi- sion (with two Indian batta- lions attached)			
" 1st Cavalry Divi- sion (with small portion of 2nd Cavalry Divi- sion).		Wambeke to Messines (in- clusive)	26th Division
Nil.	{ In reserve near Menin.	6th Bavarian Reserve Div.	
	{ In reserve near Becelaere.	11th Landwehr Brigade	
British 4th Div. (less two battalions)	{ South of Douve near St. Yves.	Stetten's Cavalry Corps (with two Guard-Jäger and two battalions 134th Infantry Regi- ment)	
	{ From St. Yves to Armentières.	Sixth Army: XIX. Corps	

It will be observed that, whilst north of Langemarck the belligerents were pretty evenly balanced, in the centre the Germans had a numerical superiority of more than three to two; and, south of the Menin road, of more than three to one. Their main attack, on the Messines—Gheluvelt front, by five fresh divisions, backed up by a sixth and a collection of smaller formations, and by very powerful artillery, was

about to fall mainly on the 7th Division—already reduced to below half its establishment—and three cavalry divisions—the equivalent in rifles of less than a German infantry brigade—supported by two Indian battalions at three quarter establishment. The odds here were approximately six to one in rifles and field and horse artillery in favour of the enemy. Fortunately, the enclosed nature of the ground, which was covered with small woods, copses and isolated buildings, and intersected with hedges and ditches, was all in favour of the better trained troops; and furthermore it tended to conceal not only the weakness of the British front line, but, what was of far-reaching importance, the almost entire absence of reserves.

#### 2ND AND 1ST DIVISIONS. THE GERMAN ATTACK ON THE BRITISH LEFT FAILS

Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.

On the 30th October the enemy bombardment of the trenches on the British left and the area behind them was begun at 6 A.M.,<sup>1</sup> sunrise being fifty minutes after that hour, and the morning dull with a slight mist prevailing. Some half an hour later strong infantry attacks developed near Zonnebeke,<sup>2</sup> against the point of Allied junction, where there were the two battalions of the 6th Brigade (2/South Staffordshire and 1/K.R.R.C.) and the French 135th Infantry Regiment. This attack was continued with more or less violence until 9 A.M., the Germans in one place, despite heavy losses, actually fighting their way as far as the wire, which one officer began to cut. All their efforts, however, were entirely unsuccessful, both in respect of gaining ground and attracting reserves; for the line was never broken, and the only British reinforcement sent up was one weak platoon. There was a feeble repetition of the attack about 11.20 A.M., and later, about noon, a show of attacking against the two battalions of the 5th Brigade on the right of the 6th, which also came to naught. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Coldstream, on the right again were only subjected to shelling. Thus the offensive, whether serious or a feint, against the British 2nd Division

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", says bombardment with heavy guns was begun at 6.45 A.M.; this probably refers to Fabeck's *Army Group*, for the 7th Divisional and Cavalry Corps war diaries state that it began on their sectors about 7 A.M.

<sup>2</sup> Made probably by the newly brought up 37th and 38th *Landwehr Brigades*.



and the French troops nearest it led to heavy losses and 30 Oct. no useful result whatever.

From German accounts,<sup>1</sup> it appears that an attack was made at 8 A.M. by the *54th Reserve Division* and the *30th Division* against Gheluvclt and the front immediately south of it—that is the part of the line held by the 1st and 3rd Brigades of the 1st Division and, counting from north to south, the 2/Queen's, 2/Green Howards, 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers and 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers of the 7th Division. "It had not the success expected", and although the two divisional generals went up into the front line to encourage the men, no impression could be made on the British. There is little about the attack in the records of the 1st or 7th Division, except that the battalions of the 7th Division, in trenches on a forward slope, suffered considerable loss from artillery fire. This important success in defence—as happened on numerous other occasions—receives no more mention in the British war diaries than that there was a good deal of German aeroplane reconnaissance; that prominent buildings were badly shelled; and that the woods in front were full of Germans who were evidently massing there, but, owing to the fire directed on them, were otherwise quiet.<sup>2</sup> The 3rd and 1st Brigades, certainly, had no further attacks made upon them later in the day, and at night the Germans opposite entrenched themselves, some only three hundred yards away. But the 7th Division, as we shall see, had other trouble in store for it.

#### 7TH DIVISION AND 3RD CAVALRY DIVISION, TILL NOON. THE GERMAN ATTACK ON AND THE LOSS OF ZAND- VOORDE

The attack against Zandvoorde, on which the fire of the greater part of Fabeck's two hundred and sixty heavy guns seems to have been concentrated, developed very differently from those on Zonnebeke and Gheluvclt.<sup>3</sup> For over an hour—from 6.45 A.M. to 8 A.M., according to the German official account—fire was poured on the trenches

Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> A party of the 2/Queen's, about one hundred and fifty strong, under Major H. R. Bottomley (died of wounds 18 May 1915), was heavily attacked, but remained out all day in some trenches in advance of the general line. It accounted for many Germans.

<sup>3</sup> Colonel Bauer, the artillery expert at O.H.L. in his book "Der grosse Krieg in Feld und Heimat", p. 65, complains, however, that the heavy guns were distributed over the front and not concentrated at the breaking-through points as they should have been.



of the 1st and 2nd Life Guards of the 7th Cavalry Brigade, which lay in front of Zandvoorde, and on the zone behind them.<sup>1</sup> The trenches, of the narrow type of the period, sited on a forward slope and easily seen by the enemy, without any form of shelter except cover from weather, were blown in whenever a heavy shell came near them, and many men were buried. It was obvious that under such a fire, a choice between annihilation or retirement was only a matter of time, and orders were issued for the second line to be manned by the supports. Nevertheless, the three or four hundred men of the Household Cavalry held out until 8 A.M., at which hour an infantry attack in overwhelming force—the *39th Division* and three *Jäger* battalions<sup>2</sup>—was launched against them. Orders for retirement to the second line were then issued, but the greater part of the two squadrons on the left, one of the 1st and one of the 2nd Life Guards, with the Royal Horse Guards machine guns, were unfortunately cut off and annihilated, only a very few wounded being taken prisoners.

News that the 7th Cavalry Brigade had been forced back reached I. Corps headquarters about 8.30 A.M. and was passed on at once to the 7th Division, where, although some of the cavalymen had been seen going back, the nature and extent of the attack, owing to the closeness of the country, was not fully known.<sup>3</sup> The enemy, too, came on very cautiously: for, according to his own account,<sup>4</sup> Zandvoorde was not in possession of the *39th Division* until 10 A.M. No information from the cavalry reached the 22nd Brigade, whose headquarters were nearest to Zandvoorde, or the 21st Brigade close by, although General Kavanagh sent messages twice; but the diary of the latter

<sup>1</sup> From right to left the order was: squadron 1st L.G., squadron 2nd L.G., machine guns of the R.H.G., squadron 1st L.G., squadron 2nd L.G.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 67, where *30th Division* is a misprint for *39th Division*.

<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that it was practically impossible to pass messages along or parallel to the front, as the troops were in lengths of trench separated by considerable distances. Information, now and at later periods, owing to the special liability of damage to wires parallel to the front, had to be sent back to division and corps headquarters, whence it was distributed forward again. This system required a considerable amount of wire which was often cut. Generally speaking, during the Battles of Ypres, telephone equipment of all kinds was very scarce and the lines bad; messages forwarded by divisional headquarters were almost exclusively sent by runners.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 67 (in which German time is not converted). *30th Division* is a misprint in the translation for *39th Division*.

formation records that "as the morning wore on it was <sup>30 Oct.</sup> evident that the enemy was on Zandvoorde ridge". And the entry was made not without reason, for at 9 A.M. two German batteries with an infantry escort came into action on the northern edge of Zandvoorde. They were at once engaged at 1,200 yards range by a section of the 105th Battery, which had been brought up into the open to support the infantry, and four guns of the 106th Battery, 2,500 yards to the north in the woods south of Herentage Chateau, also turned on to them, for—as the battery commanders said—they had very little ammunition but plenty of time to look about for targets. So effective was the fire that the German detachments ran away and were kept away for over an hour. Then the section was shelled by concealed heavy howitzers and withdrew under cover of the smoke from a windmill that was set on fire for the purpose. Soon after this, about 10 A.M., the three battalions of the 7th Division lying in the line east of the Zandvoorde—Gheluvelt road, immediately north-east of Zandvoorde—the 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers, 2/R. Scots Fusiliers, and 2/Green Howards—having repelled the frontal attack made on them, as already narrated, were enfiladed by gun and rifle fire from the village. The 21st Brigade headquarters just west of the road behind the spur midway between Zandvoorde and Gheluvelt were fired into with shrapnel at short range, as were the 2/Bedfordshire in support near headquarters. To get touch of the line and assist the exposed flank, a company of the Bedfordshire and half the 54th Field Company R.E. were sent up on to the spur, but they were quickly blown off it.

Meantime the efforts of the brigade and divisional commanders had been directed to forming a new line behind Zandvoorde. When the regiments of Household Cavalry retired from the village to their support line west of it on the low ground in the valley of the Basseville stream, Major-General Byng moved the two regiments of the 6th Cavalry Brigade forward from Klein Zillebeke to cover their retreat. It was evident from the heavy and continuous gun fire that the German attack was a serious one, and he therefore made preparations to hold the Klein Zillebeke position, about a thousand yards in front of the village of that name. This being amongst trees on practically flat ground, was less exposed to artillery fire and harder to locate, though it had a poorer field of fire than the original position.

About the same time as the 6th Cavalry Brigade was moved forward, shortly before 9 A.M., Br.-General Lawford (22nd Brigade), who had three battalions in reserve between Zandvoorde and Klein Zillebeke, ordered two of them—the 2/Gordon Highlanders (20th Brigade) and the 1/South Staffordshire (22nd Brigade)—to cover the retirement of the 7th Cavalry Brigade, and, if possible, to regain Zandvoorde, whilst on their left he used the third, the 2/R. Warwickshire,<sup>1</sup> to hold the woods facing the village. Owing to the very heavy artillery fire, the progress made by this force was very slow.

Lieut.-General Allenby, hearing of the retirement from Zandvoorde, placed Colonel Bulkeley-Johnson's detachment of three cavalry regiments, then at Klein Zillebeke, at the disposal of General Haig; and, by the latter's request, it was used between Zandvoorde and Hollebeke, south of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, with a view to joining in the counter-attack on Zandvoorde from the south-west. At 9.15 A.M. Sir D. Haig further despatched Major-General Bulfin with the two battalions of the 2nd Brigade still in corps reserve—the 1/Northamptonshire and the 2/R. Sussex—to a rendezvous half-way between Veldhoek and Zandvoorde with instructions to support the counter-attack. Later he sent him the 23rd Field Company R.E. (1st Division).

Thus, towards 10 A.M. a number of troops were in motion towards Zandvoorde. But they were too late to save the 1/R. Welch Fusiliers, the troops next to the village on the north. They had already been for some three hours under heavy artillery fire, in trenches in the valley in full view of the enemy, and could only retire over an exposed slope—a position forced on the battalion by the necessity of keeping its place in the general line. Very shortly after the Germans had obtained possession of Zandvoorde ridge their infantry seized a farm to the right rear of the battalion. Thence they attacked it in flank, firing from a hedge only thirty yards away, and from the rear at a couple of hundred yards range, though on the front they still kept at a distance. At the same time, a battery firing from higher ground opened on the Welshmen with shrapnel, raking their trenches from end to end. As in other parts of the line, rifles began to jam, and ammunition to run short,

<sup>1</sup> The strength of this battalion was 7 officers and 150 other ranks, under Captain E. G. Sydenham. All the machine guns of the 22nd Brigade, except one, were out of action.



and the battalion, fighting stoutly to the last, was, except 30 Oct. for a few scattered parties, completely overwhelmed. It lost Licut.-Colonel H. O. S. Cadogan killed, 9 other officers and 320 other ranks, of whom 4 officers and 50 men were taken prisoner. Only eighty-six survivors answered the roll call in the evening.

The Scots Fusiliers and Green Howards next to the Welch Fusiliers also suffered heavily but, warned just in time, the Scots Fusiliers were able to send up a small party of eight men to cover their right flank; and shortly after this the British line was completely closed again by the arrival of the various reinforcements.

From right to left, the new line covering the gap where the two cavalry regiments had stood, consisted of the squadron of the Royals still at Hollebeke Chateau; two regiments of Bulkeley-Johnson's detachment; the 6th and 7th Cavalry Brigades; the Gordon Highlanders, the South Staffordshire, the Warwickshire, the Bedfordshire near the spur north of Zandvoorde, and then after a gap the refused right flank of the Scots Fusiliers (21st Brigade).

Every attempt of these troops to advance to recover Zandvoorde proved impracticable, though supported by the whole of the 7th Divisional artillery. The Bedfordshire and the Engineers with them about 2 P.M. tried to counter-attack southwards with their left on the Zandvoorde—Gheluvelt road, but by weight of numbers and metal, the British were forced back to the edges of the small woods which mark the line from Hollebeke Chateau to the southern boundary of the grounds of Herenthage Chateau, about three thousand yards north of Zandvoorde. The 12th Battery, which had pushed through the woods to support the infantry, lost four officers and had three guns disabled by direct hits, and could not be withdrawn until nightfall. General Bulfin sent first the 1/Northamptonshire and then the 2/R. Sussex to the support of the Gordon Highlanders and South Staffordshire, and with their help the Germans were brought to a standstill.

This turn of affairs and the hopelessness of getting forward again made the position of the Scots Fusiliers and the Green Howards, north of Zandvoorde, extremely perilous. It now formed a pronounced salient in the line, as the left of the latter battalion was well in advance of the general line near Gheluvelt. At 12.45 P.M., therefore, divisional orders were sent to both battalions to retire to a position in continuation of the new line behind Zandvoorde—on the



right some twelve hundred yards in rear of the original front, and linking up on the left with the 3rd Brigade in front of Gheluvelt. The Scots Fusiliers drew back to the new position, though they lost nearly a hundred men in the operation; but the orders to the Green Howards did not get through until 3.30 p.m.—an example of the difficulties of inter-communication. Fortunately at that hour, in spite of the loss of their commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel C. A. C. King, and, although they were only some three hundred strong, the Green Howards were not only still in possession of their ground, but had established such fire superiority over the enemy, that, like the bulk of the battalions of Smith-Dorrien's force at Le Cateau, they were able to break off the action in the middle of the afternoon, with the loss of ten men, using a covering force of only one platoon. Here, between Gheluvelt and Zandvoorde at any rate, as is known from their own account<sup>1</sup> the Germans had no zest for further losses.

South of Zandvoorde the enemy made no attempt, as he had done northwards, to utilize for envelopment the break he had made in the British line; but towards 10.30 a.m. the *II. Bavarian Corps*, with its *4th Division* north and its *3rd* south of the canal, attacked all along the front of what remained of the 3rd and 2nd Cavalry Divisions. The bombardment was increased in vigour, but few infantry pressed on with determination except near Hollebeke Chateau, which was still held by the squadron of the Royals. This attack was repulsed, but the 7th Cavalry Brigade was subsequently withdrawn through the 6th into the Klein Zillebeke line.

#### 2ND CAVALRY DIVISION: THE GERMAN ATTACK ON AND THE LOSS OF HOLLEBEKE AND HOLLEBEKE CHATEAU

Whilst the left of the German *XV. Corps*, the *39th Division*, had achieved a little progress, its right, the *30th*, had made none whatever. Up to 11.30 a.m. the *II. Bavarian Corps* near the Comines Canal also accomplished nothing, as has been seen; its heavy guns did comparatively little harm to the thin, widely scattered line of the British cavalry; and though its infantry had shown themselves, they had not come on with spirit. Towards noon, however,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 285.

some of the German guns appear to have been moved forward, and the attack of the corps was concentrated on the sector of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, the left of the 2nd Cavalry Division, near Hollebeke village, just south of the Comines Canal. Soon so many of the trenches were blown in that a wheel back of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, pivoting on its right, was ordered. Its left was taken clear of the village, but possession of the road bridge over the canal was retained. No line having been prepared on the new position the men had to find what natural cover they could in the open. 30 Oct.

This retirement of General H. Gough's left not only brought the Bavarians within three miles of the town of Ypres, but enabled them to close round Hollebeke Chateau, and at 2.30 p.m. the squadron of the Royals which was holding the grounds was forced to retire. It did so deliberately, covered by another squadron, and carried off its wounded and machine guns.<sup>1</sup>

The pressure of the *II. Bavarian Corps* continuing until dusk, all three brigades of the 2nd Cavalry Division—six regiments in all, owing to the absence of Bulkeley-Johnson's detachment—and the one and a half Indian battalions, were gradually withdrawn to the prepared second line, behind the position first taken up by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade in its retirement. This ran near the top of the Ypres ridge, from about half-way between Messines and Wytshaete, in front of the latter village, and then north-eastwards, roughly along the 50-metre contour, to the canal half a mile west of the bridge north-west of Hollebeke. Thence the 6th Cavalry Brigade took the line up along the canal to the bridge.

The *Bavarian Corps* made no attempt to follow closely. The "strong hostile counter-attacks" alleged in the German official account to have taken place which "forced

<sup>1</sup> The severe hand-to-hand fighting which the German official account ("Ypres", p. 68) claims to have occurred here, and later in Hollebeke village, has no foundation in fact; the forces were never within three hundred yards of each other, and the village was lost before the chateau. The regimental history of one of the regiments ("Bavarian Infantry Regiment No. 22", pp. 20-1), which attacked alongside the 17th, specifically states that it reached the chateau at night and found it unoccupied.

"Bavaria", p. 140, claims that the right of the 4th Bavarian Division by 11 a.m. had taken the heights west of Zandvoorde. An examination of Map 2 or Sketch A seems to show that this must mean it reached the western end of the rise on which the village stands. Its left was hung up opposite Hollebeke Chateau and suffered heavy loss by flanking fire from Hollebeke village. The 3rd Bavarian Division hung back because it could not get touch with the 26th Division on its left.

it to put in all its reserves",<sup>1</sup> must have their foundation in the short bursts of British rifle fire during this gradual retirement; for, with the small force at the disposal of General H. Gough, no other form of aggression was possible. The retirement, as a whole, was carried out deliberately and in good order; but unfortunately the order for it to begin was late in reaching No. 3 Company of the 57th Rifles near Oosttaverne<sup>2</sup> and this party was enveloped on both flanks and lost eighty out of one hundred and forty men before it could get away. The greater part of one company of the 129th Baluchis sent up to cover the retirement was also cut off.

Colonel Bulkeley-Johnson's detachment, the return of which had been asked for by General Gough at 1.30 P.M., after it had taken part in the counter-attack on Zandvoorde, rejoined the 2nd Cavalry Division at 5 P.M., but there was now no necessity for its further employment, and its three regiments were sent back to their respective brigades.

Thus the situation south-east of Ypres seemed, for the moment, to be stabilized, although Zandvoorde ridge had been lost and another irreplaceable battalion of the B.E.F. had been destroyed.

#### 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION AND 4TH DIVISION: THE GERMAN ATTACK AGAINST MESSINES—WYTSCHAETE—ST. YVES FAILS

Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.

In the 1st Cavalry Division sector, on the right of the 2nd, there was very heavy shelling of Messines, but no determined infantry attack was attempted until evening when it was decisively repulsed. The German account is that "though the Württemberg troops [*26th Division, XIII. Corps*] attacked with great gallantry, the enemy was too well prepared for the assault.<sup>3</sup> On the right wing the *122nd Fusilier Regiment* took the village of Wambeke;<sup>4</sup> on the left wing the *51st Infantry*

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> But see footnote 4, below.

<sup>3</sup> The British troops in line against this division, which had come north again after attacking the 6th Division at Ennetières, etc., were: 2 companies of 57th Rifles ( $\frac{1}{2}$  company in reserve), with three troops 5th Dragoon Guards in the support trenches; 3 squadrons 11th Hussars, with one troop 5th Dragoon Guards; and 3 squadrons Queen's Bays.

<sup>4</sup> Wambeke was a tiny hamlet of some six cottages; it was well in advance of the British line; there is no record of any fighting there. The regimental history "*Fusilier Regt. No. 122*", written by its adjutant, states that it captured Wambeke about 5 P.M. from "an Indian regiment,



“ *Brigade* worked forward towards Messines. The edge of 30 Oct. the ridge north-east of the last-named village was stormed; but the assault on the locality itself, which was to have been delivered at 6.10 in the evening, made no progress owing to heavy enfilade fire from the south.”<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere to the south, it may be added, the enemy had to chronicle failure; Stetten’s *cavalry corps* “ had been unable to take St. Yves or make progress against the strongly-fortified wood south-west of it”. [Ploegsteert, held by part of the 11th Brigade of the 4th Division.] “ The same story describes the day’s work of the *XIX. Corps*, fighting to the south of the cavalry”, against the 4th Division.<sup>2</sup>

Although the enemy bombardment went on without any sort of lull all day and was specially severe at St. Yves, there was little trouble in keeping the German cavalry and *XIX. Corps* at a distance by fire until dusk, although some Germans got within eighty yards of the trenches. Then about 6 P.M. the enemy penetrated the line of the 11th Brigade, but was at once expelled, as already described.<sup>3</sup>

#### 7TH DIVISION AND 3RD CAVALRY DIVISION: NOON TILL NIGHT. RECONSTITUTION OF THE BRITISH LINE OPPOSITE ZANDVOORDE. FRENCH CO-OPERATION. FORMATION OF BULFIN’S FORCE

We left the 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division about 1 P.M. unable to recapture Zandvoorde; but, in spite of the attacks of the German *XV. Corps* and the right of the *II. Bavarian Corps*, these formations more or less held their own on the new line that had been so hastily taken up. There had been no time to dig trenches, except in the case of the hundred and fifty men representing the 2/R. Warwickshire—who had been detailed to hold the wood opposite Zandvoorde—and there was little cover to be had except behind hedges and in ditches. Fortunately the German infantry only “ trickled”, as a report says, slowly over the crest of Zandvoorde ridge, and did not press on

Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.

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“ under English officers, and a regiment of English infantry”. Possibly, therefore, it may refer to the mishap to the company of the 57th Rifles reported near Oosttaverne. But, in any case, no English infantry was opposed to the 26th Division on the 30th October.

<sup>1</sup> “ Ypres”, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> “ Ypres”, p. 69.



when it came under rifle and machine-gun fire. At this period of the Battles of Ypres the Germans seemed to rely on their superior artillery and on snipers picking off officers and leaders : they were very cautious, perhaps as a result of their earlier losses, and failed to follow up a success at once. At critical moments the infantry seemed to stop, possibly owing to heavy losses in officers ; in any case the hesitation of Fabeck's *Army Group* was in striking contrast to the reckless bravery of the new *Reserve* corps earlier in the battle.

But although the enemy had been held back—imposed on by the bold front of a few weak squadrons and of battalions in many cases little stronger than companies—it was evident that his immense superiority in numbers both of men and guns must in the end tell in his favour. At 12.30 P.M. General Haig issued orders that the line from the bend in the canal near Hollebeke to in front of Gheluvelt should be held at all costs ; and that, as soon as a new line was established, the 1/Northamptonshire and 2/R. Sussex should be returned to him and concentrated with the rest of the 2nd Brigade then in reserve behind Gheluvelt.

As the day wore on, however, this reserve had mostly to be used to fill gaps ; half the 2/K.R.R.C. was sent into the line of the 1/Queen's, and half the Loyal North Lancashire—with the 26th Field Company to help them entrench—to its right. It did not prove possible for General Bulfin to release the Sussex and Northamptonshire. The line opposite Zandvoorde was, indeed, so thin and so completely lacking in supports and reserves to back it, that about 1.30 P.M. Sir D. Haig ordered three battalions of the five which formed the reserve group of the 2nd Division—the 2/Grenadier Guards, Irish Guards and the 2/Oxfordshire L.I., then behind Polygon Wood under Br.-General Lord Cavan—to move two miles southward and take post behind the 3rd Cavalry Division near the canal, where the detachment was to come under the orders of Major-General Bulfin.<sup>1</sup> The two Guards battalions arrived there about 3 P.M.—the Oxfordshire followed later—and dug in deeply as a support line across the Zandvoorde—Klein Zillebeke road about a mile east of the latter village. About 5 P.M. two companies of the Irish Guards were moved up to support the cavalry more closely, and later both Guards battalions were used to take over from the 6th

<sup>1</sup> Owing to some misunderstanding General Bulfin never exercised this command.

Cavalry Brigade, which was then withdrawn, with the 30 Oct. 7th, into reserve. The Oxfordshire towards 10 P.M. sent up two companies to relieve the 23rd Field Company R.E. (of Bulfin's group), which was holding a gap between the Irish Guards and the Gordons north of them. General Haig also sent the London Scottish, who had joined the I. Corps reserve near Hooge, back to Ypres to proceed by motor buses to be at the disposal of the Cavalry Corps. General Allenby attached the battalion to the 2nd Cavalry Division and it was directed to St. Eloi, where it arrived late at night.

At 11 A.M. Sir D. Haig had warned General Dubois that he might require assistance, and the latter had immediately placed a cuirassier brigade (General Maison-Rouge) at his disposal and sent it towards Hooge. Towards 3 P.M. the British commander sent a further urgent appeal for help, revealing the seriousness of the situation. It was obvious that if the Germans succeeded in breaking through south of Ypres they would threaten, if not cut, the communications of all the Allied troops to the northward. With soldierly regard for the situation as a whole, General Dubois at once abandoned his own plans and set in motion his corps reserve—two battalions of the 68th Regiment and one of the 268th—under Lieut.-Colonel Payerne, covering their march with General Laperrine's cavalry brigade. These battalions reached Zillebeke in the course of the evening. It may be added here that at 10.30 P.M., on hearing more fully the results of the day's fighting, General Dubois ordered his 31st Division to despatch another battalion from each of the above-named regiments and a group of field artillery, to be at Zillebeke by 6 A.M., and placed the whole French force there under General Moussy.<sup>1</sup>

There was no need to employ any of these French reinforcements on the 30th October. Though gun fire and sniping continued all the afternoon, the Germans made no further infantry attack on the 7th Division, and merely threatened one about 4 P.M. against the 3rd Cavalry Division. As dusk fell and all firing died away, the British were left to reorganize, and dig in as best they could—and such was the lack of tools that in some cases hay-forks were used for the purpose. Communication of orders and the replenishment of ammunition and supplies were for some time impeded by a number of the enemy who, in the confusion of the battle, had penetrated into the woods

<sup>1</sup> Commanding 33rd Brigade, 17th Division, IX. Corps.

behind the British line. Individuals and small parties were attacked by these Germans, who later were rounded up or escaped to their own lines under cover of night.

#### BRITISH SITUATION AT NIGHTFALL

Map 25.  
Sketch  
10.

For the moment the general situation seemed to be satisfactory, although Hollebeke and Zandvoorde had been lost and the line between Messines and Gheluvelt had been forced back in the centre over a mile and a half. The former front of the 3rd Cavalry Division was now held entirely by infantry, and the line formed by Cavan's, Bulfin's and Capper's troops ran from the angle on the Comines—Ypres Canal near Hollebeke nearly east to a point twelve hundred yards short of Zandvoorde, and thence north-east to join the 3rd Brigade line, which lay in front of Gheluvelt. South of the canal the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions had withdrawn under pressure from their first to their second line which was practically on the crest of Messines ridge. There was the usual difficulty of re-adjusting junctions in the dark, and for the whole night the 26th Field Company R.E., which had been sent up to assist the infantry, held a gap between the 7th Division and 3rd Brigade.

At the close of the day G.H.Q. were still in ignorance of the forces by which the 7th Division and Cavalry Corps had been attacked. It was clear, however, that the greater part of the German cavalry had been withdrawn and replaced by infantry brought from a distance: indeed, a report of the new quarters of the *II. and IV. Cavalry Corps* near Lille came in during the day. From the air, owing to bad weather conditions, the only strategic information obtained was that in the morning there had been five trains in Comines station, and large bodies of troops north-west of that town in the area between the railway and the Korteker stream (which is parallel to the railway and runs into the Lys  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile above Comines).<sup>1</sup>

No operation orders were issued from G.H.Q. for the 31st. After visiting General Allenby's headquarters at Kemmel, the Commander-in-Chief had proceeded, about 2 P.M., to those of General Haig at the White Chateau, near the level crossing—better known as Hellfire Corner—east

<sup>1</sup> These must have been part of the *II. Bavarian Corps*. The *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* in reserve at Menin does not appear to have been noticed.



of Ypres on the Gheluvelt road.<sup>1</sup> Before he left, the 30 Oct. measures to secure the British line, already narrated, had been taken. The conduct of the battle lay in the hands of the commanders of the I. and the Cavalry Corps, and all that could be done was to send to them any reinforcements that might be collected. Sir John French therefore directed the II. Corps, now in process of being taken out of the line, to send an infantry brigade to Neuve Eglise, to come under Cavalry Corps orders.<sup>2</sup> He also communicated with General Foch, with the result that the French commander paid a visit to him at St. Omer between 1 A.M. and 2 A.M. on the 31st, and promised that five battalions of infantry and three batteries should be sent to General Haig's assistance that day.<sup>3</sup>

The operation orders of the I. Corps issued at 7.5 P.M.,<sup>4</sup> gave instructions to the Cavalry Corps as well as to the 1st, 2nd and 7th Divisions. The 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions south of the canal, the three French battalions from Zillebeke, north of the canal, and, next north of them, the force of six battalions of Generals Bulfin and Lord Cavan, under the former, were all directed to advance from the British line at 6.30 A.M. and counter-attack the enemy forces which had captured Hollebeke and Zandvoorde. This advance was to be covered by the 7th Divisional artillery, two 6-inch howitzer batteries and the armoured train.

At 10 P.M. General Haig informed the Commander-in-Chief by telegraph of these measures. At this hour, however, Messines was again attacked, and it was obvious from the continuous heavy artillery fire on the village that a very serious effort was intended against it. General Allenby therefore modified his orders to the Cavalry Corps,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Douglas Haig up to the 28th had his advanced headquarters at Hoge Chateau—where 1st Division headquarters were also located with an advanced headquarters at Veldhoek—but gave up his rooms to the 2nd Division, which had come to Hoge on the 26th, in order to give General Monro more accommodation.

<sup>2</sup> The headquarters and the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers and 1/Lincolnshire of the 9th Brigade (General Shaw), and the 2/K.O.S.B. and 2/K.O.Y.L.I. of the 13th Brigade were sent, as being practically the only battalions in anything like fit condition for immediate further efforts.

<sup>3</sup> Thus the war diary of the British Operations Section, the units being those already promised to Sir D. Haig by General Dubois. Palat (viii. p. 188) states, however, that General Foch promised eight battalions of the 32nd Division, which were to detrain at Elverdinghe during the night of the 30th/31st October. We shall find that the 32nd Division arrived at St. Eloi and Wyttschaete during the 31st October and 1st November.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 39.



which were issued after receiving those of Sir D. Haig. He directed only the 2nd Cavalry Division to attack in co-operation with General Bulfin's group and the French battalions, whilst the 1st Cavalry Division was to remain on the defensive at Messines. He had good hopes of being able to maintain his position, for reinforcements—Shaw's brigade, the Oxfordshire Yeomanry, and London Scottish—were on their way to him. And General H. F. M. Wilson, on his right, had informed him that all available reserves of the 4th Division—three and a half battalions—would be near Ploegsteert at daybreak, available either to assist the 4th Division to hold its own or to support the Cavalry Corps as required.

Map 25. At night the detailed distribution of troops engaged in the Battles of Ypres was:—

### III. Corps :

4th Division . . .	Armentières to the Douve.
Cavalry Corps :	
1st Cavalry Division . . .	From the Douve to Messines (inclusive).
2nd Cavalry Division . . .	From Messines to the Comines Canal.
3rd Cavalry Division . . .	In reserve at and south of Zillebeke.
French Cavalry Brigade and three French battalions . . .	At Zillebeke.
Bulfin's Force (6 battalions) <sup>1</sup> . . .	From Canal to opposite Zandvoorde.

### I. Corps :

#### 7th Division :

22nd Brigade (3 battalions) <sup>2</sup>	} From opposite Zandvoorde to about 1,300 yards south of Gheluelvt.
21st „ (3 „ ) <sup>3</sup>	
20th „ (2 „ ) <sup>4</sup>	

#### 1st Division :

3rd Brigade . . . . .	Covering Gheluelvt (one battalion in reserve).
1st Brigade (3 battalions) <sup>5</sup>	From Poezelhoek to Reutel.
2nd „ (2 „ ) <sup>6</sup>	In support of the 3rd Bde.

<sup>1</sup> 2/Grenadiers, Irish Guards, 2/Oxford L.I. of Cavan's force, 1/Northamptonshire, 2/R. Sussex, with the 2/Gordon Highlanders between the Irish Guards and the two companies of the Oxfordshire.

<sup>2</sup> 1/R. Welch Fusiliers absent, reorganizing.

<sup>3</sup> 2/Wiltshire absent, reorganizing.

<sup>4</sup> 2/Gordon Highlanders under Gen. Bulfin; 1/Grenadiers absent, reorganizing.

<sup>5</sup> 1/Coldstream absent, reorganizing.

<sup>6</sup> Other two with Gen. Bulfin.

2nd Division :

4th Brigade (2 battalions) <sup>1</sup>	} Reutel to Zonnebeke — Roulers road.
5th „ (3 „ ) <sup>2</sup>	
6th „	

30 Oct.

Of the 36 infantry battalions of the three British divisions there were actually 21 in the front line ; eight in brigade or divisional reserve ; and only three, the 1/Gloucestershire (3rd Brigade), 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border (20th Brigade), with a brigade of French cavalry and the Northumberland Hussars, available near Veldhoek as corps reserve. Four battalions, the 1/Grenadier Guards, 1/Coldstream Guards, 1/R. Welch Fusiliers and 2/Wiltshire, had been practically annihilated.

#### GENERAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH ON THE NIGHT OF THE 30TH/31ST OCTOBER

##### THE YSER INUNDATION IS EFFECTIVE

The general situation in Flanders on the night of the 30th/31st October was disquieting. The British Expeditionary Force had been continuously fighting for ten days ; it had suffered heavy losses ; its reserves were exhausted ; and no reinforcements from home of any importance, either of men or guns, were on their way to the theatre of war. The one bright feature in the picture was the certainty of the fullest co-operation between French and British, which General Dubois had manifested his firm intention to ensure. In his evening telegram to the Secretary of State for War, Sir John French said little more than that considerable reinforcements had reached the enemy, and that ground had been lost which it was hoped to retake by a counter-attack. It was obvious that General Dubois, having given up his reserve to the British, could hardly be expected to accomplish anything decisive. General d'Urbal, in fact, directed him to secure his position by completing the defensive works already begun, by constructing others, and by pulling out troops from the front line to form a new reserve.<sup>3</sup> Though the 32nd Division was now approaching Ypres, there seemed but faint hope of being able to effect any decisive diversion with it. Instead of being put in as a division, as

<sup>1</sup> Other two with Gen. Bullfin.

<sup>2</sup> 2/Oxfordshire L.I. with Gen. Bullfin.

<sup>3</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 53.

General Foch anticipated,<sup>1</sup> it would, no doubt, have to be used piecemeal to stop holes in the line.

In spite of the rising waters of the inundation, the German *III. Reserve* and *XXII. Reserve Corps* made desperate endeavours during the day to reach the Belgians. The artificial character of the obstacle remained unsuspected by the enemy, and the rise of water was attributed to the recent heavy rainfall. Though shelled at long range from the sea by Admiral Hood's squadron,<sup>2</sup> the German *5th Reserve Division (III. Reserve Corps)*, nearest the coast, achieved the most success; it actually crossed the Dixmude—Nieuport railway embankment, which formed the main Belgian line of defence, and secured possession of Ramscapele (3,000 yards south of Nieuport) beyond. The *6th Reserve Division*, next to the *5th*, got close up to Pervyse (about halfway between Ramscapele and Dixmude); but the *43rd* and *44th Reserve Divisions (XXII. Reserve Corps)*, though across the Yser just south of Dixmude, failed to make progress. Ramscapele was recaptured during the night by a Belgian counter-attack, and this proved to be the closing act in the battle of the Yser. For almost simultaneously the enemy's advance in this region came to a sudden stop, and he began retiring, abandoning wounded, arms and ammunition. General von Beseler at last realized that the determination of the King of the Belgians, though at heavy cost, had made it impossible for him to succeed. At 10.30 P.M. the *6th Reserve Division* reported that the attack could not be continued owing to the constant rising of the water; it seemed to the Germans as if the whole country had sunk with them, and behind them. There was no time to lose, if the divisions of the *III. Reserve Corps* were not to be cut off, and during the night General von Beseler issued orders for their retirement. The *XXII. Reserve Corps* further south managed to remain across the Yser until the 2nd November, when it also was forced to retreat by the rising waters. The Allied left had been secured, but equally was the right of the Germans safe from attack. Leaving a weak screen to watch the inundation, the enemy was free to bring the divisions which had attacked the Belgians southwards to Ypres, where the crisis of the struggle was taking place.

Between the Belgian front and Ypres there had been

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> See "Naval Operations", i. pp. 230-4.



little change on the 30th October. De Mitry's group lost 30 Oct. Bixschoote again, and some trenches west of it, although elsewhere all attacks were repulsed,<sup>1</sup> and eventually much of the lost ground was recovered by a counter-attack.

Towards 2 P.M. General d'Urbal placed at de Mitry's disposal the 15th Infantry Regiment, the leading unit of the 32nd Division, which had just detrained at Elverdinghe.

## NOTE

## THE GERMANS ON THE 30TH OCTOBER

The small impression made on the British line during the 30th **Map 25.** October by the five fresh divisions brought up by the Germans—**Sketch** they admit failure at Gheluvelt and Messines,<sup>2</sup> and their only success, at Zandvoorde—Hollebeke, was brought to a standstill by the arrival of five battalions under Generals Bulfin and Lawford—seems to have led them to imagine that large Allied reinforcements had been, or were ready to be, brought up.<sup>3</sup> There was definite cause for this: it is not mere rhetoric or excuse. The Germans had themselves thrust into the fight Reserve corps raised after the outbreak of war, and they might reasonably expect that Great Britain had by now sent across the channel the fourteen Territorial mounted brigades and fourteen Territorial Force divisions in existence before the war; nay, might even have expanded them to four times those numbers. Knowledge of the British forces was extraordinarily imperfect, to judge by the German official account, although it was written three years after the publication of Sir John French's despatch. The fighting commanders, it seems, were paralysed by the thought that fresh British forces might appear at any moment from the shelter of the woods and surprise them, just as the original B.E.F. had suddenly stood in their way at Mons. The attacks in Flanders had already "cost the most dreadful " sacrifices in blood, and very little had been achieved . . . they " were continued in spite of protests from divisional commanders " because Crown Prince Rupprecht had ordered them in very hard " words".<sup>4</sup> The caution and want of enterprise on the part of the enemy's fighting troops were strange to those who knew how little they had between them and the coast; but as a matter of fact they had good and substantial cause in their well-founded fear of British musketry apart from their reasonable suspicion that heavy reserves were concealed in the woods ready to counter-attack. Possibly they could not conceive that so weak a line should dare to deny the way to the coast.

Nevertheless, the Supreme Command—then located at Mezières, a hundred and twenty miles away—determined to persevere in the operation to break in from the south-east of Ypres, and for the 31st

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", pp. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", pp. 64, 71. On the former page it is stated that the Allies had numerical superiority on the 30th.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel Bauer: "Der grosse Krieg in Feld und Heimat", p. 65.



directed the principal attacks against Wyttschaete—Messines ridge and Gheluvelt.<sup>1</sup> To encourage the troops to a final effort it was announced that the Kaiser would himself be present on the 31st, and towards noon on that day he arrived at the battle headquarters of Crown Prince Rupprecht.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 72, 77.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", pp. 73-4. Fabeck's *Army Group*, which was attacking, was part of the *Sixth Army* under Rupprecht.

## CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT. THE CRISIS. 31ST OCTOBER 1914. THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S *ARMY GROUP* (*continued*)

LOSS OF PART OF MESSINES. LOSS AND RECAPTURE OF GHELUVELT

(Maps 2, 26, 27, 28; Sketches A, 10, 11)

### THE ENEMY'S PLANS

SATURDAY the 31st October 1914 was to prove one of the most critical days in the history of the British Expeditionary Force, if not of the British Empire. The weather was warm, for the season of the year, and fine. The morning mist cleared off about 10 A.M., and thus gave the enemy the first opportunity in Flanders to use observation balloons in directing the fire of his heavy artillery, a visible and impressive sign of his superiority in material.<sup>1</sup>

Maps 27  
and 28.  
Sketch  
10.

The initiative still lay with the enemy. General von Fabeck, we are told, recognized from the outset that the occupation of Messines—Wytschaete ridge was of decisive importance.<sup>2</sup> On the 31st October, therefore, the main German effort was made in the southern sector of the attack, between Messines and the Comines Canal, against the British cavalry, and Fabeck ordered up his reserve, the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, into the line opposite Wytschaete, between the *II. Bavarian Corps* and the *26th Division*. But in spite of the wonderful defence put up by the scattered groups of the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions against overwhelming numbers, the 31st October 1914 will always be remembered for the more dramatic

<sup>1</sup> The first British observation ("sausage") balloon, lent by the Navy, after trial at Roehampton, made its ascent near Poperinghe on 20th May, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 71.

fighting near Gheluvelt. Orders were given for this village to be attacked, as the capture of Zandvoorde on the 30th had made it possible to operate against it from the south-east as well as from the east, and to enfilade, with good observation, much of the British line in the vicinity. A decisive victory seemed assured: for everything pointed to the British being completely exhausted. And they may well have appeared so to the enemy. The line that stood between the British Empire and ruin was composed of tired, haggard and unshaven men, unwashed, plastered with mud, many in little more than rags. But they had their guns, rifles and bayonets, and, at any rate, plenty of rifle ammunition, whilst the artillerymen always managed to have rounds available at the right place at critical moments.

#### THE ATTACK ON MESSINES. 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION AND 4TH DIVISION

Map 26.  
Sketch  
10.

The 1st Cavalry Brigade (Br.-General Briggs), with the 9th Lancers (2nd Cavalry Brigade)<sup>1</sup> and two companies of the 57th Rifles attached, held Messines as a bastion projecting forward from the general line. The 9th Lancers had taken over the defence of the eastern front of the village—a small one of only 1,400 inhabitants with a lime-works and a mill—at 5 P.M. on the previous evening; but although Lieut.-Colonel David Campbell knew the ground, he had only 150 men at his disposal, and at least double that number was requisite. On his right were the two Indian companies, and on his left, the Queen's Bays. The 11th Hussars, after their heavy fighting of the previous day, held the second line of defence in the village itself. The 5th Dragoon Guards were broken up and used partly in support and partly to fill gaps in the line.

Intermittent shelling from 8-inch howitzers, and constant sniping from riflemen ensconced within a hundred yards of the British trenches, went on all night, and there was much sound of movement in the German lines.<sup>2</sup> At 2.45 A.M. officers of the staffs of the 1st Cavalry Division

<sup>1</sup> Of the other two regiments of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, the 4th Dragoon Guards were in reserve behind the 4th Cavalry Brigade, and the 18th Hussars near the canal in the line of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade.

<sup>2</sup> According to "Regiment No. 125", p. 43, after a short bombardment, an attack on Messines was begun at 1.45 A.M. by its 2nd Battalion and a Jäger battalion; it was stopped by devastating fire as the moon came out for a short time.

and the 4th Division met in conference, and, as an attack 31 Oct. seemed imminent, it was agreed that the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers of the 12th Brigade should relieve the 57th Rifles and take over the line from the Douve up to Messines.

This relief was in progress when, about 4.30 A.M.—some accounts make it earlier; at any rate, whilst it was still dark—the enemy attacked Messines and the sectors north and south of it.<sup>1</sup> The four short pieces of trench<sup>2</sup> between the Douve and the outskirts of the village had just been manned by a company of the Inniskillings, when some Germans, disguised by wearing turbans, approached and retired. Almost immediately afterwards men of the *119th Grenadiers* and *125th Infantry Regiment* (both of the *51st Brigade, 26th Division*) cheering and with horns blowing, charged the trenches covering the two south-eastern exits of the village. Here the 57th Rifles were still waiting to be relieved. Some of the enemy rushed right over the Indians and up to the support trench, held by two troops of B Squadron of the 5th Dragoon Guards. A dozen Germans actually jumped into this trench, where they were bayoneted, the remainder being shot down or driven off. Another party, however, passed to the left of the support trench, and were counter-attacked and settled with by the detachment of the 57th Rifles already relieved, led by Captain R. S. Gordon, who had just taken over, Major E. E. Barwell having fallen; but he also was killed in the charge.<sup>3</sup> Two troops of C Squadron of the 5th Dragoon Guards, manning a barricade in the village at the junction of two roads and in houses near, completely held their own, and renewed attacks failed, the Germans being bayoneted or shot at close range. Reinforcements consisting of A Squadron of the 5th Dragoon Guards, one squadron of the 11th Hussars and two of the 4th Dragoon Guards (2nd Cavalry Brigade) now began to come up, and the Inniskilling Fusiliers made a flank attack north-eastwards. As daylight appeared the enemy fell back, suffering heavily, not only from rifle and horse artillery fire, but from the enfilade fire of the 4th Division field guns on Hill 63 to the south.

<sup>1</sup> Soon after 4 A.M. three more battalions *I.* and *III./125* and one of the *119th Grenadiers*, were sent to reinforce the original attack. "Regiment No. 125", p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> See sketch of defences of Messines on Map 27, which indicates clearly the scattered and non-continuous nature of the trenches and the lack of communication trenches typical of the Ypres defences.

<sup>3</sup> The detachment was eventually brought out of action by its native officers, no British officers being left.



A similar attempt to break the line north of Messines was repulsed by the Queen's Bays. An attack against the 9th Lancers in front of Messines was also set in motion ; but it was never pushed strongly and was easily dealt with. Thus the first attacks on Messines had no success.

At 8 A.M., as the mist began to thin, German heavy guns and trench mortars were concentrated on the village, and an hour later <sup>1</sup> the German *26th Division* began a formal attack on it. Against the two flanks of the British bastion round it special efforts were made, as during the night attack. The heavy shelling, which brought down showers of débris as one by one the houses were demolished, and rifle and machine-gun fire at short range from some brick-fields in which German infantrymen had established themselves, quickly made it evident that the twelve weak squadrons defending Messines, with the support of only I Battery R.H.A., must soon be annihilated.

There was already one gap in the front-line defences on the south-eastern side, where the trenches lost by the 57th Rifles had not been reoccupied, and soon there was another to the north of the village, where a great effort to break in was made by the *122nd Fusiliers* and *125th Infantry Regiment*.<sup>2</sup> The flanking trenches on which the defence largely relied, because the line was not continuous, soon ceased to be tenable ; but the cavalrymen in the trenches facing the enemy still held on. Eventually, soon after 9 A.M., Lieut.-Colonel Campbell made a personal report of the situation to Br.-General Briggs and, as the Germans had broken in north of the village, received authority to withdraw the 9th Lancers from the eastern side of Messines. Of their slender strength they had lost 75 per cent of their officers and 35 per cent of other ranks. The retirement to the western outskirts was carried out in good order through the line of the 11th Hussars, who were holding the second position in the village. The line

<sup>1</sup> This agrees with "Regiment No. 125", p. 43. A renewed attack was made at 9 A.M. with all reserves put in.

<sup>2</sup> It is claimed that the men of the *125th* were the first to get into Messines at its north-eastern corner at 10 A.M. "Ypres", p. 80. The regimental history of the *125th* claims that No. 10 Company got in first at the barricade on the Comines road, at the north front of Messines about 10 A.M. That of the *122nd* states that there was little progress on either flank of the regiment, and it lay in its trenches till 4 P.M. When it then attempted to advance it was enfiladed by two machine guns from Wytshaete and had to desist. The early morning attack of the regiment is not mentioned, although prisoners belonging to it were captured and its dead identified. Part at least of *Infantry Regiment No. 121* supported the *125th* ("Regiment No. 125", p. 43).

of defence now presented no salient and joined up directly with the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers on the south and the Queen's Bays on the north. 31 Oct.

The dismounted men of the twelve British squadrons had been attacked by the greater part of twelve battalions.<sup>1</sup> Putting the squadrons at eighty rifles—they did not all provide this number—and the German battalions at 500—they had had many casualties—the odds in favour of the enemy were over six to one, probably much more.

After a considerable pause—nearly a whole hour—the Germans came on again. The 1st Cavalry Brigade was now forced back, but only from house to house. According to their own official account, the Germans brought a battery of artillery,<sup>2</sup> and engineers with demolition charges, into Messines to aid their infantry. Thus towards noon, after the loss of many houses, the British line of defence was retired to the main street, a wide one, which lay well inside the western half of the village. Help was now in sight. Br.-General Shaw's group from the II. Corps had arrived at Kemmel<sup>3</sup> to support the Cavalry Corps, and, at General Allenby's request, the 2/King's Own Scottish Borderers and the 2/King's Own Yorkshire L.I. were sent towards Messines. The battalions moved forward under heavy shell fire, their counter-attack becoming effective about 1 P.M. The K.O.Y.L.I., only three hundred strong, advanced north of the Wulverghem—Messines road and the K.O.S.B. hardly much stronger, south of it. Simultaneously the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers counter-attacked on their right, and the London Scottish were sent to the left, deployed and pushing forward north of Messines. The Inniskillings entirely regained the lost trenches of the 57th Rifles; but in the village itself only a few houses, including the convent reached by the K.O.S.B., were recaptured. The enemy had too many machine guns, and the new troops were too weary with their hurried journey and too hopelessly outnumbered by the enemy to accomplish more.<sup>4</sup>

The London Scottish, 750 strong, under Lieut.-Colonel

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 81 and sketch map:—122nd Fusiliers, 125th Infantry Regiment, 119th Grenadiers and 121st Infantry Regiment.

<sup>2</sup> "Regiment No. 125" says, only one gun of *F.A.R. No. 29*. Only one gun was seen by the British.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 297.

<sup>4</sup> According to "Regiment No. 125", p. 43, the Germans were equally exhausted, and decided to wait until some howitzers could be got up to deal with the houses. Next day the three battalions of the regiment numbered about 200, 300 and 300 men, respectively.

G. A. Malcolm—the first Territorial Force battalion to go into action—had been sent up to Ypres to the I. Corps on the 30th. On arrival there they had been despatched at once by General Haig to the hard pressed Cavalry Corps. In the early morning of the 31st, General Allenby ordered them from St. Eloi towards Hollebeke to support the 2nd Cavalry Division, but when the news of the serious attack on Messines reached him, he offered the battalion to the 1st Cavalry Division. Major-General de Lisle preferred that it should counter-attack at a suitable place rather than merely bring direct assistance to the 1st Cavalry Brigade; about 10 A.M. therefore he decided to send it to the front of the 4th Cavalry Brigade, which was on the left of the 1st, and gave the battalion instructions to proceed via Wytschaete and the windmill about half a mile north of Messines, and thence make an attack south-eastwards. On approaching Wytschaete the scouts reported that it was impossible to move that way owing to heavy fire. The battalion was therefore diverted along the back (west side) of the Messines ridge, whose steep slopes gave some protection, to L'Enfer Wood, north-west of the windmill. There it received orders from Br.-General Hon. C. E. Bingham (commanding 4th Cavalry Brigade) to reinforce the cavalry holding the ridge east of the main road between Messines and Wytschaete. In the belief that an attack was in progress, the London Scottish, instead of dribbling up reinforcements, deployed for attack, and advanced in that formation. The movement was observed by the enemy, and they were at once heavily shelled; but their right reached the 4th Cavalry Brigade trenches, and their left, though badly enfiladed by machine guns, even got beyond it and into action with the enemy's infantry.

The Germans now appeared to be seriously menacing Wytschaete, and the reserve of the London Scottish was deployed on the left to deal with them. Without the impulse which it might have given to the main attack, no further progress of the battalion was possible. Under very heavy fire the men found what cover they could in the open, for the scattered cavalry trenches—which were little better than a chain of rifle pits—provided accommodation for only a few of them. They thus remained until the line was rearranged at night. Their losses for the day reached the total of 321.

The arrival of the K.O.S.B., K.O.Y.L.I. and London Scottish, although they numbered less than fifteen hundred



men in all, enabled the 1st Cavalry Division to hold its own, 31 Oct. and even to recover part of the lost ground. Nevertheless, the situation remained perilous; for at night in village fighting mere numbers count far more than they do by day, and the numerical superiority of the Germans was obvious. In Messines they were in houses not fifty yards away from the British line; they swept every street with machine-gun fire; and their artillery had set the British part of the village in flames. Yet, as ever, there was another side to the picture.<sup>1</sup> The German "casualty list was a large one";<sup>2</sup> whilst the troops in the village lost direction, undoubtedly fired into each other, and did not succeed in forming a continuous line of defence through the village until evening. It is admitted that, north of Messines, the right of the 122nd Fusiliers could not reach the top of the ridge,<sup>3</sup> whilst south of the village the 119th Grenadiers were unable to advance and "were compelled "by heavy losses from enfilade fire from the south<sup>4</sup> to be "content with the task of securing the left flank of the "Division [26th]".

At nightfall General de Lisle decided to relieve the 1st Cavalry Brigade by the 2nd from the divisional reserve. This operation, in spite of the proximity of the enemy, was successfully carried out after 9 P.M. The line through the village from the left of the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers was now formed by the K.O.S.B.—who had only one officer remaining—a squadron of the 9th Lancers, two squadrons of the 4th Dragoon Guards, and two of the Oxfordshire Hussars,<sup>5</sup> with the K.O.Y.L.I. on the left. The rest of the 9th Lancers were in reserve. The casualties of the 1st Cavalry Brigade for the 31st October were 25 officers and 169 other ranks, of whom only 12 were missing. Those of the 9th Lancers (2nd Cavalry Brigade) were 11 officers and 43 other ranks, of whom 5 were missing.

South of Messines, and between it and the river Lys which marked the southern limit of the great German attack, Stetten's *cavalry corps* and the *XIX. Corps* "were still unable to advance".<sup>6</sup> The left of the 4th Division

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote, p. 307.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote, p. 306.

<sup>4</sup> Probably from the rifles of the Inniskilling Fusiliers and the guns on Hill 63.

<sup>5</sup> This regiment, which had just arrived, was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, and sent up to the 2nd Cavalry Brigade to replace the 18th Hussars (absent with the 2nd Cavalry Division), one squadron being retained to work on a reserve line of defence.

<sup>6</sup> "Ypres", p. 82.



was shelled, but no serious infantry attacks are reported to have taken place until night, and then they were repulsed by fire. At one place only, at St. Yves, did the Germans penetrate the line: but, continually harassed, they retired thence before morning.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE ATTACK ON WYTSCHAETE, 2ND CAVALRY DIVISION

Maps 26,  
28.  
Sketch  
10.

According to the German account, in the *II. Bavarian Corps*, "on the 31st the main pressure was to be exerted "by the *3rd Bavarian Division* in the southern sector of "attack",<sup>2</sup> that is against the British 2nd Cavalry Division (Major-General H. Gough) between Wyttschaete and the Comines canal. To assist the *3rd Bavarian Division*, the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* was, as we have seen, brought up on its left—between it and the *26th Division* which was engaged at Messines—"to make the attack on Wyttschaete".<sup>3</sup> In spite of most effective heavy artillery support, the two Bavarian divisions concerned could make no progress. "At nightfall the left wing of the *II. Bavarian Corps* was "still hanging back, unable to break the strong resistance "opposed to it",<sup>4</sup> and the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* was held in hand for a night attack on Wyttschaete.<sup>5</sup>

The line of the 2nd Cavalry Division was about 3½ miles long. To defend it Major-General H. Gough had three batteries of horse artillery (E, H and J), six batteries of French field artillery sent up by the 32nd Division during the day, and just 3,250 rifles, including the 18th Hussars of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, the London Scottish—who, as we have seen, were used to assist the 4th Cavalry Brigade—and one and a half Indian battalions.<sup>6</sup> Even counting the infantry of a German division at 8,000 instead of at the full

<sup>1</sup> The total losses of the 4th Division from its arrival in Flanders up to this day, 31st October, were 207 officers and 5,572 other ranks.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 71. This corps attacked astride of the canal, *4th Division* north and *3rd Division* south of it.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", p. 77. One regiment, the *16th Bavarian Reserve*, however, was employed near Gheluveld (see p. 316). It went up about 2 p.m. when the Germans were in fear of a counter-attack. "Bavaria", p. 142. Wyttschaete was more than double the size of Messines, with 3,500 inhabitants, and lime works, tobacco sheds, and drain pipe factory.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 77. "Bavaria", p. 141 says:—the *II. Bavarian Corps* "gained painfully by severe close fighting only a little ground".

<sup>5</sup> "Bavaria", p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> This total of 3,250 included all reserves, and was made up thus: 2nd Cavalry Division, 1,350 (excluding horseholders, transport and regimentally employed men); 18th Hussars, 200; London Scottish, 750; 57th Rifles, 350 (back at Kemmel); 120th Baluchis (in support), 600.

establishment of 12,800, the odds in the enemy's favour 31 Oct. were five to one.

The 2nd Cavalry Division line was very heavily shelled from 6 A.M. onwards, and throughout the day trenches were being blown in and men buried in the débris. Although enemy infantry was seen moving, particularly in the direction of Oosttaverne, it did not seriously press any attacks during the morning. Artillery fire alone, and not very much of it, seemed sufficient to stop the Germans, except near the canal. There a large body of infantry tried to advance from Hollebeke to the bridge north of the village, which, owing to lack of explosives, had not been blown up. The 4th Hussars, under Major P. Howell, in the Hollebeke woods 700 yards away, enfiladed this advance and, in spite of regular and continuous shelling from four German batteries, inflicted such heavy losses on the enemy that he eventually abandoned all attempts to reach the bridge.

Towards noon, as we have seen, the 4th Cavalry Brigade, the right of the 2nd Cavalry Division, and the London Scottish, were called on to assist in meeting the attack on Messines; but this, if it in any way disturbed General Gough's plans, was compensated for by the arrival, about the same time, on the left near the canal of Maison-Rouge's cuirassier brigade and two squadrons of the 1st Life Guards (7th Cavalry Brigade); and, later, of four battalions of Woillemont's brigade of the French 32nd Division, to which the six batteries already with General Gough belonged. At night this infantry brigade took over the left of the line from the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, and the latter was then withdrawn into reserve. The cuirassier brigade was relieved later by the French 9th Cavalry Division.<sup>1</sup>

At 4.45 P.M. the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* made a determined attack on Gough's right, against the 4th Cavalry Brigade and the London Scottish. It was continued until 5.30 P.M., but then died away. Immediately after, the enemy's bands were heard playing the Austrian National Hymn. As Hindenburg was at the time engaged in his disastrous retreat from Warsaw, it can hardly have been to celebrate a victory in the East.<sup>2</sup> By 6.30 P.M. all was quiet, and it became possible to reorganize the 2nd Cavalry Division line.

At 10.15 P.M. a further attack was made against the whole

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> The retreat was commenced on 18th October and the Russian advance was not checked until 14th November.

front of the division for half an hour, but it was repulsed ; and, although sniping and artillery fire went on, no further serious attack was made until after midnight.

Thus from Messines to the canal the line had been held intact on the 31st October, except for the part of Messines which had formed a salient.

The losses of the regiments of the 2nd Cavalry Division in the four days' fighting ending on the 31st, were recorded as 723, leaving a fighting strength of about twelve hundred, so that, for the troops engaged, the casualties amounted to over 30 per cent.

#### THE ATTACK ON GHELUVELT. 1ST DIVISION

Map 2.  
Sketch A. The highest part of the Ypres ridge north of Wytschaete lies midway between Hooge and Veldhoek. It is marked by No. 5 kilometre-stone on the Menin road,<sup>1</sup> at which point, known to the British Army as Clapham Junction, several roads and tracks converge. From this part of the ridge, a long flat spur runs east-south-eastward to Krui-seecke six thousand yards away. It is about a mile wide at Veldhoek, narrowed by the depressions on either side, in which flow the Bassevillebeek and the Reutelbeek. It widens to nearly two miles between Veldhoek and Gheluvelt ; then it diminishes again to a little over half a mile in breadth at the latter village being cut into by the Krommebeek and the Scherriabeek, and it remains narrow until it broadens into a knob at Krui-seecke. Thus Gheluvelt village, with the chateau and park adjoining it on the north-east, helped by some copses and isolated farms south of the road, blocked the approach to the Ypres ridge by the easiest spur, over which ran the best road.

The spur is practically level from the main ridge eastward to Gheluvelt, which stands on a slight rise ; it drops fifty feet in the next mile and then mounts some twenty feet to Krui-seecke. The value of Gheluvelt for observation purposes in all directions is therefore clear. The British line on the morning of the 31st, being east of the village, was exposed on a forward slope ; but, Zandvoorde and Becelaere having been lost, to abandon Gheluvelt was to give up practically all ground observation east of the ridge, north of the Comines canal.

<sup>1</sup> The stone is marked on Map 2 ; it is 1½ miles on the west side of Gheluvelt.



Covering Gheluvelt was the 3rd Brigade (Major-General H. S. Landon), supported by two battalions of the 2nd, under Colonel E. Pearce Serocold, K.R.R.C.<sup>1</sup> In the outskirts of the village, just four hundred yards east of the church, was the 2/Welch Regiment, holding three hundred yards of front north of, and at right angles to, the Menin road, with one platoon across the road and south of it. On the right of the Welch was the 1/Queen's, with its left and right companies in the general line, whilst its two centre companies, with two of the 2/K.R.R.C., held a large oblong salient, which included an orchard and a farm on slightly higher ground. Next on the south came two companies of the 1/Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, on whose right again was a detachment of the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers (21st Brigade),<sup>2</sup> which had been sent up at dawn to relieve the other two companies of the Loyals, then withdrawn into Landon's reserve.

31 Oct.  
Map 27.  
Sketch  
11.

North of Gheluvelt on the left of the Welch, was the 1/South Wales Borderers, which held the line nearly up to the eastern end of the chateau grounds, with three companies in front line and one in support. Beyond the Borderers was the 1st (Guards) Brigade:—1/Scots Guards, 1/Cameron Highlanders, and 1/Black Watch. In reserve, in the shallow valley west of Gheluvelt, were two companies each of the K.R.R.C. and Loyals; two platoons of the former, in conjunction with the reserves of the 2/Welch, covered the eastern exits of the village.

About a quarter of a mile south of this reserve was the headquarters party, sixty strong, of the Royal Scots Fusiliers; behind it, in front of Veldhoek, in hastily dug rifle pits covering the Menin road, and acting as escort to the XXXIX. Brigade R.F.A., was the fourth battalion of the 3rd Brigade, the 1/Gloucestershire.

The night of the 30th/31st October was an uneasy one for the 1st Division. It was moonlight until about 2 A.M.,<sup>3</sup> the Germans were in trenches only two to three hundred yards away, and desultory shelling and sniping never ceased. At daylight—just after 6 A.M., when a little rain had fallen and the weather became fine—an infantry attack was made against the whole line of the 1st Division. Except at the orchard, at the corner of the salient of the

<sup>1</sup> The other two were with General Bulfin in the Zillebeke area.

<sup>2</sup> The battalion, excluding transport details, was only 6 officers and 175 men strong, of whom 120 were sent up, the rest remaining in reserve.

<sup>3</sup> New moon was on 19th October.



Queen's, held by a platoon of the K.R.R.C., where the Germans got in, they were repulsed everywhere with heavy loss. The 1/Scots Guards, under Major B. G. Van De Weyer, even captured 58 Bavarians, who stated that they belonged to the *XXIV. Reserve Corps*.<sup>1</sup> The battalion was so weak in numbers that it could not spare an escort for these prisoners and borrowed one from the support company of the South Wales Borderers.

The orchard of which the enemy had got possession enabled him to enfilade the front line of the Queen's; and, although a counter-attack was at once made by a platoon of the K.R.R.C., all attempts to retake it failed. Soon the enemy began a systematic bombardment of the 3rd Brigade trenches and brought up more men. Under protection of the ground and the cover of trees and hedges, which prevented all but one company of the Queen's from having more than a restricted view, the Germans—although disorganized and delayed by British rifle fire—extended their line eastward from the orchard across the front of the Queen's, only about a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards away. Another counter-attack to turn the Germans out, made about 9 A.M. from the right flank by the two companies of the Loyals, was also unsuccessful, owing to the heavy artillery fire it encountered. This fire continued to increase in violence and accuracy, and there were many direct hits on the trenches.<sup>2</sup> By 9.30 A.M. the right half of the Weleh had been simply "blown out" of their trenches, and Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Morland judged it advisable, whilst leaving the left of his battalion to cover the flank of the South Wales Borderers, to withdraw the

<sup>1</sup> This corps was, at this time, composed of the *48th Reserve Division*, engaged in the La Bassée area, and the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*. The *16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment* was hurried up about 2 P.M. to repel a counter-attack (see footnote, p. 310). Men of the *102nd Infantry Regiment* of the *XII. Corps*, not mentioned as present in any German official account, were seen by British officers who were captured. It has, however, been pointed out by French historians that when a German unit is unsuccessful, its presence is ignored in official accounts. In one case, related by Colonel Legrand-Girarde, in "Operations du XXI. Corps d'Armée", although not only prisoners but the colours of a German battalion were captured, there is no mention in "S. und G." of the unit, nor of the formation to which it belonged, as being engaged in that day's fighting. It is therefore impossible at present to ascertain the full total of enemy battalions engaged in a particular operation. All that can be said for certain is that it was never less than the German official account states.

<sup>2</sup> The German account says that after the general failure of the early morning infantry attacks, a systematic bombardment of the whole British line over a front of ten and a half miles was resumed at 8 A.M., the heaviest fire being directed on Gheluvelt and the area near the village.

rest of his men to the support line. Before moving 31 Oct. he went personally and informed Lieut.-Colonel H. E. B. Leach, of the South Wales Borderers on his left, of his proposed action; but no hint of it reached the Queen's for some time, and, owing to the conformation of the ground, the retirement could no more be seen from the south of the road, than could the German attack of the 29th October on the 1/Coldstream. Thus the flank of the Queen's was left unprotected. Unfortunately the Welch support line was only a sunken lane, and proved to be even more exposed than the front line. Colonel Morland therefore withdrew both firing line and supports, and, passing through Gheluvelt, rallied about a hundred men behind the left of his battalion, which was still in position. Another sixty men who had lost touch when the Welch turned to the right in the village, went on and joined the Gloucestershire at Veldhoek. On their arrival, a company of the latter battalion, eighty strong, was sent forward by Major-General Landon to fill the gap left by the Welch. This company worked round by the north of Gheluvelt, but by the time it reached the front it was reduced to thirty men, then quickly to fifteen; and when surrounded shortly after, as the Germans advanced, numbered only thirteen. Thus the gap in the line in front of Gheluvelt remained open.

On the right of the Welch, the 1/Queen's, under Major C. F. Watson—Lieut.-Colonel B. T. Pell had been mortally wounded early in the morning—and the detachment of the K.R.R.C. still held on, although enemy gun and rifle fire swept the ground near with an intensity never before experienced. One company of the Queen's actually reported that it was "quite all right". There was not much artillery support, as every runner sent back to ask for it was killed almost immediately after leaving the headquarters trench. Soon the farm in the salient held by the Queen's, with its outbuildings and ricks, was alight, and the heat from it became so overpowering that it seemed impossible that men could remain near. Gheluvelt must have appeared an easy prey, and at 10 A.M. the Germans began a converging infantry advance against it. Three infantry battalions and a *Jäger* battalion of the *54th Reserve Division*, and three battalions of the *30th Division* attacked direct, north and south of the Menin road respectively, whilst three other battalions of the *30th Division* co-operated on their left, making a flank attack north-westwards

against the K.R.R.C. on the right of the Queen's. The *16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment* followed in support.<sup>1</sup> Thus thirteen battalions, of which at least six were quite fresh, were in motion against the K.R.R.C., Queen's, Welch, South Wales Borderers and Scots Guards,<sup>2</sup> barely a thousand men in all.

The Germans sprang up to charge with the greatest enthusiasm, cheering and singing; for they had been warned that the Kaiser himself was present.<sup>3</sup> But for more than an hour they were held back, losing heavily, as their own artillery fire against the front trenches had ceased, the range having been lengthened to catch support and reserves coming up. Such was the effect of the British rapid fire that it seemed to the Germans they were opposed by lines of machine guns. Of this attack they write, "over every bush, hedge and fragment of wall floated a film of smoke, betraying a machine gun rattling out bullets"<sup>4</sup> Still weight of numbers told in the end. Two German batteries, one firing high explosive and the other shrapnel, came up to close range and poured their fire into the burning farm at the left corner of the salient of the Queen's, whilst machine guns enfiladed the trenches from both flanks—from the captured orchard and from the bank of the Menin road. Under the hail of shell and bullets communication from the salient to the outside world was impossible, and rifles began to jam and ammunition to run short.

The German accounts speak of many counter-attacks by fresh troops, of a maze of obstacles being encountered, and of heavy casualties, especially in officers. All these, except the last, are figments of the imagination; but they provide sufficient testimony to the tenacity of the British defence in a position extemporized during the previous nights.

About 11.15 A.M. the left angle of the salient was broken into and the advanced line had to be abandoned. The

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 73-5.

<sup>2</sup> The infantry attack did not extend to the Loyal North Lancashire on the right of the K.R.R.C.; the diary of the former merely states that until noon, artillery and infantry fire was intense.

<sup>3</sup> At the battle headquarters of Crown Prince Rupprecht, commanding the *Sixth Army* ("Ypres", p. 73). According to Vogel, p. 210, they were at La Tache, near Deulemont, only four miles south-east of Messines. An intercepted wireless message disclosed the monarch's arrival to British G.H.Q., but not the place to which he actually went.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 74. Prisoners were asked by the Germans whether they had automatic rifles.



few survivors of the two companies of the K.R.R.C. 31 Oct. fell back on the other half battalion west of Gheluvelt. But the Queen's still held on in their main trenches across the base of the salient. Major Watson had to make up his mind whether to save what he could to form the nucleus of a new battalion, or to fight to the last: as reinforcements might be on their way and every minute of resistance was of priceless value, he decided to continue the defence, having orders from the 3rd Brigade not to retire on any account. Very soon, however, Germans who had been seen passing through the gap on the left towards Gheluvelt, began to fire into the doomed battalion from the rear. The survivors then tried to fall back on the brigade reserve west of Gheluvelt. Unfortunately it was too late; by this time the reserve companies had been driven off by the Germans who had entered the village.

After Gheluvelt church and the buildings round it had been shattered to a mass of broken bricks and rubble, and many of the houses set on fire, the Germans had swept away such few men as were defending the exits of the village. They were thus able to enfilade the trenches west of it occupied by the K.R.R.C. and the two companies of the Loyal North Lancashire, which had already been practically wiped out by heavy shell fire. The survivors of these six companies, Colonel Pearee Serocold having meantime been wounded, therefore retired—as previously arranged in case of emergency—to the road running south from Veldhoek, so as to join on there to the right of the Gloucestershire.

Thus it was that when the survivors of the Queen's fell back to rally on the reserve, they found that it had disappeared, and that the enemy was in possession of Gheluvelt. They were surrounded and shot down from front, flank and rear, and only two officers and twelve other ranks succeeded in escaping and rejoining the 3rd Brigade. The 2/K.R.R.C. lost 408 and mustered at night only 150. To the everlasting disgrace of the German *143rd Infantry Regiment*, it must be recorded that not only were many of the wounded and unwounded prisoners of the Queen's stripped of their uniforms and robbed of money and personal possessions, but some were clubbed and bayoneted to death.<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Colonel Pell was carried by

<sup>1</sup> It is specially stated that the *105th (Saxon) Infantry Regiment*, of the *30th Division, XV. Corps*, which also took part in the attack, south of the Menin road, behaved well to the prisoners.



his men eight miles on a stretcher, only to die. It was, however, some satisfaction to the prisoners captured by the enemy on this day, to see everywhere as they were marched back, unmistakable signs in the numbers of German dead and wounded, of the immense effect of British fire.

Whilst the final struggle of the Queen's was taking place, the area behind Gheluvelt presented a scene that to the onlooker seemed to exhibit every element of disaster. The two brigades of field artillery which had been supporting the troops at Gheluvelt, leaving behind six disabled guns—recovered later in the day—were retiring, as were some 60-pdrs.; wounded and unwounded men were drifting back, singly and in groups; and the deadly hail of shell which swept the ground was approaching nearer and nearer to Hooge. Captain Collins of the General Staff of the I. Corps now brought back to General Haig from 1st Division headquarters the news that Gheluvelt had been lost; but was able to assure him that, although men and guns were retiring, they were doing so by order, and that, in spite of the confusion, there was, in his opinion, no debacle. As it was reported that the South Wales Borderers and the Queen's were still holding on, Major-General Landon moved forward his last reserve, the three companies of the Gloucestershire, with the party of the Welch, to rally the retiring troops, and counter-attack. To this forward movement conformed the survivors of the Loyal North Lancashire and K.R.R.C., then withdrawing from Gheluvelt.\* Thus every available company of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades was engaged. But the German heavy artillery here, as in the front line, dominated the situation, and the counter-attack could make little way. It was then discovered that it was too late to save the Queen's, and Major-General Landon therefore issued orders for the troops concerned in the counter-attack to rally on their former position in front of Veldhoek. The German infantry did not follow up.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to reconcile the times given and the incidents related in the German official account with the British records. "Ypres", p. 75, states that Gheluvelt was not taken until 2 P.M., by which time "the whole place with its chateau and park was in German possession". As a matter of fact, the chateau and park were not taken—though the latter was entered—and they remained in possession of the South Wales Borderers and Scots Guards until retirement was ordered at 6 P.M. At the moment of gaining possession of Gheluvelt the German account claims that a counter-attack by fresh British forces was launched and failed; this cannot be the Worcestershire counter-attack (about to be related),



DEFENCE OF GHELUVELT 31<sup>ST</sup> OCT. 1914.

SCALE



Contours at 10 metres v.l.



**BRITISH:**  
 1<sup>ST</sup> POSITION [Symbol]  
 2<sup>ND</sup> " [Symbol]

Gheluvelt and the salient of the Queen's taken, the 31 Oct. enemy turned his attention to the two companies of the 1/Loyal North Lancashire, about two hundred and fifty strong, and the detachment of the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers, numbering a hundred and twenty, who were to the south. These troops were holding a little over half a mile of front in a line of small rifle pits—each holding a couple of men—some fifteen yards apart, hastily dug the previous night with entrenching implements. Their orders were not to retire, but to report if reinforcements were required.

Until noon they suffered much from fire, particularly from Zandvoorde, but no attempt was made to close with them, for they had a good field of fire and shot down any Germans who showed themselves. The disaster to the Queen's on their left was observed, and also that a company of the Bedfordshire in a wood on their right had disappeared; but the parties still held on and kept the enemy at bay. Reports of the situation were sent back, but none of the messengers reached brigade headquarters. Towards 1.30 P.M. the Germans were all round the small force; it was under machine-gun fire from the rear at a hundred yards' range, and infantry were creeping in from both flanks. Eighty of the North Lancashire, including one officer, remained alive to be captured, and half of this number were wounded. Next morning the survivors of the battalion mustered only one officer and thirty-five men. Of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, not only the detachment with the North Lancashire was taken prisoner, but, in the same manner and about the same time, the party of sixty in reserve was overwhelmed. Lieut.-Colonel A. G. Baird Smith, who had been wounded the previous day, his second in command, and his adjutant, were captured, and the battalion, including the transport details, was reduced to 151 men.

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and must refer to General Landon's, which certainly took place after the Germans occupied the village. This is confirmed by the statement of "Ypres", p. 75, that a Bavarian regiment was brought up to meet it; the Worcestershire, when they got into the village, found Bavarians there south of the Menin road.

Gheluvelt was probably captured by the Germans about 11.30 A.M., the portion north of the road even earlier, but they were not, perhaps, in full possession of the entire village until about 1 P.M. The account says nothing about being turned out again; it looks as if an attempt was being made to conceal this and to ignore the long pause that occurred after they took the village.



THE ATTACK ON GHELUVELT CHATEAU AND COUNTER-  
ATTACK OF THE SOUTH WALES BORDERERS, 1ST DIVISION

Map 27.  
Sketch  
11.

North of the Menin road, where, at right angles to it, lay the remaining company of the 2/Welch, the 1/South Wales Borderers,<sup>1</sup> and the survivors of the 1/Scots Guards, there is a different tale to record, though the odds against the British were at least four to one.<sup>2</sup> The right flank of the Welch, who held about one hundred yards, was now some two hundred yards north of the Menin road; on their left came the Borderers, holding three hundred yards; and the Scots Guards filled the last hundred yards up to the north-east corner of the chateau park, the wall of which ran obliquely behind the line. There was the same shortage of tools as elsewhere, in fact, the Borderers had only enough for a quarter of their men. Of bomb-proof cover there was none, though shelters were improvised for battalion headquarters. In front of the left of the Borderers and of the Scots Guards, some two hundred yards away, was a copse of young trees, growing so close together that it was practically impossible to crawl through them. Though in ordinary fighting its existence so close to the line would have told against the defenders, yet in this case it served, to a certain extent, to save from artillery fire the part of the front it covered.

From 8 A.M. onwards the whole area between the village and the chateau was subjected to a violent and searching bombardment. Towards 10 A.M., at the same time as the Queen's were attacked, the enemy infantry came on and there was almost hand-to-hand fighting.

It soon became obvious that unless substantial reinforcements were sent up, the line must give way, as some portion of the Welch had done. From the headquarters of the Scots Guards, which with those of the Borderers were now in the stables of the chateau, there was intermittent telephone communication with the 1st (Guards) Brigade, and Br.-General FitzClarence or his staff captain, Captain A. F. A. N. Thorne, came up from time to time. Thus the situation was completely known at brigade headquarters. When, about 11.30 A.M., the Germans broke

<sup>1</sup> This battalion had no machine guns; its section was sent up in the night of the 28th/29th October to assist the 1st (Guards) Brigade, and was never seen again.

<sup>2</sup> They were attacked by the four battalions of the 54th Reserve Division, supported by part of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment.

into Gheluvelt, and shortly before they annihilated the 31 Oct. Queen's further south, the remaining portion of the Welch was overwhelmed.<sup>1</sup> About an hour later the two right companies of the Borderers, crushed by artillery, were forced back to the chateau grounds, and then through them to the north-western side. But the remainder of the battalion—the support company now being up in the line mixed with the Scots Guards—was sheltered to some extent by the copse in front, and continued to hold its original position, as did the Camerons and Black Watch beyond. Lieut.-Colonel Leach of the Borderers immediately organized a counter-attack, and charged with the shattered remains of his two right companies, his battalion headquarters, and a few men of the Scots Guards. The Germans in the chateau grounds showed no desire for cold steel, bolted back pell-mell, and were either bayoneted or shot at close quarters, or escaped, dropping arms and equipment in their haste. The fire of the left of the Borderers and of the Scots Guards still in position, materially added to their confusion. The chateau grounds were found to be littered with bodies and pieces of equipment, rifles, helmets and caps. The British line up to the south-eastern edge of the grounds was thus restored; but Colonel Leach did not judge it advisable, in the battered state of his battalion, to reoccupy the line outside the grounds, and the defence was adjusted to conform to the chateau wall. A written message was sent to brigade headquarters asking for reinforcements on the right to block the gap and retake Gheluvelt village. In response, orders to the Borderers and Scots Guards to retire to Polderhoek Wood came through the telephone; but those to the latter battalion were immediately cancelled by the 1st Brigade and, in view of this, Colonel Leach also remained.

General FitzClarence now sent up the last troops at his disposal—a few men of the Black Watch and one company of the 2/Worcestershire (from 5th Brigade)—which he placed behind the threatened right flank of the Borderers; he then rode towards Gheluvelt. It was obvious that the village was lost, that large enemy reinforcements were coming up, and that, unless immediate steps were taken, the British line now pierced would be completely broken. He therefore galloped back to his headquarters in a farm

<sup>1</sup> By 10 A.M. there were only 45 alive of the 130 men of the company of the Welch left behind by Colonel Morland, and only 16 rifles were firing. At 11.45 A.M. 37 survivors were captured.

north of the Menin road near Veldhoek<sup>1</sup> and informed General Lomax of the situation. The latter was then with his staff a few hundred yards back at Clapham Junction.

Throughout the morning the 1st and 2nd Division staffs had kept in close touch with each other, and about 10.15 A.M. General Monro had placed the 2/Worcestershire at the disposal of the 1st Division. Shortly after 11 A.M. Colonel Whigham, his G.S.O. 1, visited General Lomax and heard from him that the last of his reserves had been put in. The possibility was discussed of reinforcing the line near Gheluveld by troops from the 2nd Division reserve near the south-west corner of Polygon Wood. This reserve then consisted of the 1/King's, three companies of the 2/Worcestershire and two of the 1/R. Berkshire. The idea of reinforcing was discarded as impracticable for reasons of time and space, and it was agreed that if the Germans broke through the only possible course was to adhere to the plan already arranged, which was to use the 2nd Division reserve to counter-attack them in flank from the north.

When General Lomax heard from General FitzClarence that Gheluveld had been lost, he directed him to call upon this reserve, and rode back with his staff to 2nd Division headquarters at Hooze Chateau, a thousand yards behind his battle headquarters. He arrived there at 12.45 P.M., and said laconically to General Monro, "My line is broken".

Br.-General FitzClarence at once set about carrying out General Lomax's instructions. He sent for an officer of the 2/Worcestershire to take orders, and Major E. B. Hankey, commanding, detailed his adjutant, Captain B. C. S. Clarke, to go. Twenty minutes were spent by the latter with General FitzClarence in the study of the map and the ground, and he then returned to Major Hankey with preliminary instructions. Scouts were sent out to cut any wire that might delay progress—most of them were killed by artillery fire before that duty could be accomplished—packs were discarded, extra ammunition issued, and every preparation made for a rapid advance. Simultaneously the 1/King's received orders from the 2nd Division to take part in the counter-attack on the

<sup>1</sup> Not the farm marked on the British maps as "FitzClarence Farm", but one north-west of it near the edge of Glencorse Wood, where several tracks converge. During the day the general and his staff occupied shelters in a trench on the edge of the wood, thirty or forty yards from the farm.



right of the Worcestershire. They made the same pre-31 Oct. parations, but at the last moment the order was cancelled by General Monro, and the King's were sent to hold the south-east corner of Polygon Wood between the 1st (Guards) Brigade and the 2nd Division, where the line was very weak after Lord Cavan's battalions had left. The two companies of the Royal Berkshire in the reserve were also warned that they might be required.

About 1 P.M. Br.-General FitzClarence proceeded to the headquarters of the Worcestershire and gave the order to Major Hankey to "advance without delay and deliver "a counter-attack with the utmost vigour against the "enemy who was in possession of Gheluvelt, and to re- "establish our line there". Captain Thorne, his staff captain, accompanied the battalion to guide it clear of the right flank of the South Wales Borderers.

#### THE CATASTROPHE TO THE 1ST AND 2ND DIVISION STAFFS

At the very moment that the counter-attack of the Worcestershire was getting under way a lamentable catastrophe happened at Hooge Chateau. Both the 1st and 2nd Divisions had had their headquarters there on the 30th, and now, on the return of General Lomax from his battle headquarters at Clapham Junction, the two were for the moment reassembled, though the 2nd Division staff were about to move to Eksternest (Westhoek), three-quarters of a mile to the north, so as to be nearer to their troops. Map 28.  
Sketch  
10.

The chateau in 1914—it has been rebuilt on a different plan—consisted of a main building, with an annexe attached to its western side, containing in succession a coach house, a small room with glass verandah, a studio and a conservatory. General Monro was using the small room as an office, and into it on the return of General Lomax the two generals with their G.S.O.'s 1 and 2 proceeded and there was a brief discussion. After it had been ascertained by telephone from Colonel Pereira that the 2nd Division reserves behind Polygon Wood were acting as arranged in the support of the 1st Division, a message was sent to Br.-General Fanshawe, commanding the left group of the division, directing him to withdraw all the troops he could from the front line in order to form a new reserve. It was agreed that there was nothing to



do but fight the battle out; a retirement in the circumstances was obviously impracticable, and if attempted predoomed to failure. A fairly heavy bombardment was going on all round Hooge Chateau, and German guns were searching the Menin road and its vicinity right back to Ypres. About 1.15 p.m., shortly after a low-flying enemy aeroplane had passed over, a shell fell into the chateau grounds some twenty or thirty yards in front of the coach house; a minute later another burst immediately outside General Monro's room, followed by a third, which struck the glass roof of the studio, and a fourth, which dropped in the grounds. The second shell fell on the assembled staffs. Major-General Lomax was severely wounded, and died some months later in England. Ever calm, untiring and resourceful, his loss was a heavy blow to the I. Corps. There were killed on the spot:—Colonel F. W. Kerr and Major G. Paley of the General Staff 1st Division, with Lieut.-Colonel A. J.-B. Percival and Captain R. Ommanney of the General Staff 2nd Division, Captain F. M. Chenevix-Trench, Brigade Major R.A. 2nd Division, and Captain G. P. Shedden 35th Heavy Battery. Of the officers near, four were wounded, whilst a subsequent shell mortally wounded Captain R. Giffard, General Lomax's A.D.C. General Monro, who, with Colonel R. Whigham, his G.S.O. 1, was standing in the doorway between his room and the studio, was badly stunned, but was able to continue in command. Colonel Whigham alone of the officers at the conference was unharmed. The I. Corps was at once informed, and Major-General Bulfin was appointed to command the 1st Division, but in his absence near Hollebeke, Major-General Landon was directed to take charge. It required some little time to find him at his brigade headquarters. Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Lovett, of the Gloucestershire, one of the few surviving battalion commanders, succeeded him in the 3rd Brigade. Officers of the 2nd Division rode at once to the infantry brigades to ensure that they held on; Br.-General E. M. Perceval, commanding the divisional artillery, went to the guns; whilst another staff officer was detailed to open a new headquarters at Westhoek.

At General Haig's headquarters during the early hours of the day, the situation had been recognized as serious, but not alarming. At 5.30 a.m. General Moussy had reported himself on his way to take over command of the five French battalions near Zillebeke, and at 7 a.m. General d'Urbal arrived to discuss future plans and to bring the

good news that the greater part of the 32nd Division was being directed on St. Eloi to assist General Allenby's cavalry. On the other hand, information came in whilst he was still with General Haig that a German prisoner captured during the night had stated that the whole *XV. Corps* had come up and was attacking Gheluvelt. This was the first hint of its presence in the north. Till 10 A.M., however, when the great German infantry attack began, the situation appeared normal; and even after that hour it seemed that only against Gheluvelt was a serious effort in progress. By 11.30 A.M., when, as we know, though the Germans got into the village they did not advance beyond, it was thought that the situation was easier; and the cessation in the attack was attributed to the steady assistance rendered by the artillery to the 3rd Brigade. The news from the Cavalry Corps and elsewhere was satisfactory. The only reserve that General Haig possessed was the much-trying 3rd Cavalry Division. General Allenby had asked for this back at 7.30 A.M., but only the 7th Cavalry Brigade had been permitted to rejoin him, the 6th being retained and moved to shelter half-way between Hooge and Zillebeke, behind the 7th Division.

Bad news began to come apace to I. Corps headquarters. First Captain Collins brought the information that Gheluvelt had been lost; then, about 12.30 P.M., came a report from the 1st Division that its line had been broken at Gheluvelt, that Landon's direct counter-attack had failed, and that the situation was critical, but the Worcestershire would counter-attack from the north. Staff officers were sent to inform Generals Foch and Dubois of the state of affairs, and the last reserve, the 6th Cavalry Brigade, was brought back to Hooge to support the 1st Division. Then came messages that the gap near Gheluvelt had been widened by the annihilation of the detachments of the North Lancashire and Scots Fusiliers, and that the 7th Division, which had hitherto only been shelled, was being strongly attacked on the right by infantry. Much of the news that came in was contradictory, as is usual in such circumstances, but there was no gainsaying what Sir Douglas Haig could see for himself as he rode out towards Hooge—his appearance, moving up the road at a slow trot with part of his staff behind him as at an inspection, doing much to restore confidence. The nearer fall of shells, the gradual retirement of the line of guns supporting

the infantry near Gheluvelt, and the steady movement of stragglers and streams of wounded towards Ypres all told a tale. And on his return to his headquarters, Br.-General John Gough gave him the confirmation of the information that the 1st Division had actually broken. As preliminary to a possible retirement, General Haig issued orders at 1.30 P.M.<sup>1</sup> for the line:—bend of the canal at Hollebeke—Klein Zillebeke—bend of the Menin road in front of Hooge—Westhoek—Frezenberg (on the Ypres—Zonnebeke road which was the boundary with the French) to be held at all costs, and he sent his Chief Engineer, Br.-General S. R. Rice, to see some responsible commander at the front and bring back definite news.<sup>2</sup>

Then at 1.50 P.M. came the report of the calamity to the fighting staffs of the 1st and 2nd Divisions.

There was little to stop the German advance if it were persisted in; for the line of the I. Corps had been thinned to the utmost to support the most threatened spots. There was now a decrease in the noise of battle, which might be attributable to a successful counter-attack or ominous of the approaching end. The 1st Division sent up towards Gheluvelt its last reserve of fighting men, technical troops, the 23rd and 26th Field Companies Royal Engineers, under Colonel A. L. Schreiber. The latter company was shortly afterwards despatched as infantry, without technical equipment, to Major-General Bulfin's command. The first use made of the 23rd Field Company was to form a line of posts—as battle police were afterwards used—to collect stragglers and then to dispose of the small parties of Germans who had got through the line.

The situation appeared so serious that the I. Corps began to prepare orders—they were not sent out until 2.40 P.M.—to the effect that, although every effort should be made to hold on to the line already defined, between the canal and Frezenberg, yet if it should prove impossible to do so, the line about a mile behind it, already marked out, must be taken up, and defended to the last, namely:

<sup>1</sup> These orders, possibly owing to the disaster to the staff and the shift of headquarters, are not recorded in the 2nd Division diary, and were not received by that formation.

<sup>2</sup> Two rear positions had some time previously been reconnoitred and partly marked out by General Rice in collaboration with the C.R.E.'s of the divisions, covering the approaches to Ypres from St. Julien and Gheluvelt. Both started from Klein Zillebeke. The advanced one ran west of Veldhoek to the canal near Bixsechoote, the other from Hellfire Corner (railway crossing on Menin road) to Potijze.



Verbrandenmolen — Zillebeke — Hellfire Corner — Potijze, 31 Oct. less than two thousand yards from the walls of Ypres.<sup>1</sup>

About 2 P.M., soon after the arrival of the news of the catastrophe at Hooze Chateau, Sir John French appeared at the White Chateau (close to Hellfire Corner) on foot, having alighted from his car some short distance back. He found the G.O.C. I. Corps and his Chief General Staff officer seated at a table on which lay the débris of the glass chandelier brought down by the concussion of a shell. Their news—except that just brought in by Major N. Malcolm, the G.S.O. 2, that the 2nd Division was holding its own—was as depressing as the scene of damage. Reinforcements the Commander-in-Chief had none to offer, for British sources were exhausted; the only hope was help from the French; and he left on foot to regain his car and seek General Foch.<sup>2</sup>

Hardly had the Commander-in-Chief quitted the chateau, and General Haig was about to mount his horse to ride to the 1st Division headquarters to take personal command if necessary, when Br.-General Rice returned. He galloped up to the chateau at full speed, not white-faced as described in some popular accounts, but heated almost purple by his exertions. He brought the ever-memorable report from the 1st Division that Gheluvelt had been retaken by counter-attack of the 2/Worcestershire; that the Germans were tumbling back in disorder; that the crisis was—for the moment at any rate—past; and that support was required to prevent the fruits of this success from being lost. General Haig at once sent off his A.D.C., Lieutenant G. H. Straker, 15th Hussars, who ran after the Commander-in-Chief, overtook him and gave him the good news as he reached his car.

<sup>1</sup> This order also did not reach 2nd Division headquarters; but Colonel Schreiber, the C.R.E. 1st Division, heard of it at I. Corps headquarters, and brought it to the notice of the General Staff 2nd Division about 3.40 P.M., when fortunately it was no longer applicable.

<sup>2</sup> The time was about 2.30 P.M.; this is confirmed by the fact that Sir J. French's message to Sir D. Haig promising French aid, written from General d'Urbal's headquarters at Poperinghe (see p. 342), is timed 3.35 P.M. From the White Chateau to Poperinghe is 8½ miles, part of which Sir J. French had to walk. The statement in his despatch of 20th November 1914 (*London Gazette* of 27th November), that the meeting between him and General Haig took place at Hooze, is a mistake; it was at the White Chateau.



THE COUNTER-ATTACK OF THE 2/WORCESTERSHIRE,  
2ND DIVISIONMap 27.  
Sketch  
11.

One company of the Worcestershire had been sent up earlier in the day to support the right of the 1st (Guards) Brigade. Thus, when the battalion was given the signal to advance south-eastwards, the actual strength of the three companies present was only 7 officers and 350 other ranks. The XLI. Brigade R.F.A. was detailed to support them, and from the south-west corner of Polygon Wood, where he had his observing post on the roof of a cottage, Lieut.-Colonel S. Lushington, commanding it, could see the whole advance. For the first six hundred yards of the movement the Worcestershire were under cover of woods on their left, defiladed from view, though not protected from fire, and moved in fours. On reaching a small belt of trees west of Polderhoek Chateau, Major Hankey deployed the battalion into two lines at fifty yards distance, with two companies in the first line, a small party under an officer being specially detailed to secure the exposed right flank. There were still a thousand yards to traverse, and the scene that confronted the Worcestershire was sufficient to demoralize the strongest nerves and shake the finest courage. The stretch of country which they saw in front of them was devoid of cover of any kind; beyond it lay the fences and enclosures of Gheluvelt Chateau and village, in which many houses were in flames. Wounded and stragglers in considerable numbers were making their way back to the shelter of the woods, some of whom cried as the advancing troops passed through them, that to go on was certain death, whilst the enemy's high explosive and shrapnel bursting overhead gave point and substance to the warning. But, nothing daunted, the three companies swept on. The first two hundred yards were crossed in one long rush; nevertheless, the Worcestershire were observed by the enemy's artillery directly they appeared in sight, and its fire was redoubled. Over a hundred men fell, but the rest still pressed on. The wire fences of the enclosures near the village and the wall and railing of the chateau grounds were reached and passed, and contact with the enemy's infantry gained. The Bavarians (*16th Reserve Infantry Regiment*) and other Germans north of the Menin road, and actually in rear of part of the South Wales Borderers, were enjoying the

repose of victory, searching for water and looting, and in 31 Oct. no expectation of such an onslaught. They offered no organized resistance, and were soon fleeing back in confusion through the village. The Worcestershire pushed on until they reached what remained of the South Wales Borderers and Scots Guards, who, almost surrounded, were still holding their own on the south-west face of the chateau grounds. Major Hankey established his three companies on their right in the sunken road which leads from the chateau to the village, with the outer flank at the corner where this road turns south-east.

General FitzClarence, who had accompanied Major Hankey to the place of deployment and remained there to watch the counter-attack, on seeing its success galloped back to Polygon Wood and reported to the 1st Division:—"It's all right, my line still holds north of the village".

The position of the Worcestershire in the sunken road was by no means comfortable; they received a considerable amount of machine-gun and rifle fire from Gheluvelt, so patrols were sent in to settle with the enemy. They found there and drove out a few German patrols and scouts—who dodged about as if bewildered and fired at random—and took a few prisoners. The bulk of the invaders seem to have fled when the counter-attack reached the chateau grounds.

The greater part of the village was again in possession of the British, but still by no means secured; and at 3.45 P.M. Major Hankey sent an order to his fourth company, which since morning had been entrenched behind the light railway about four hundred yards north-west of the village, to come up into line with the remainder of the battalion. This it did at once and extended through the village to the church and churchyard; but, being unable to get in touch with any troops on its right, turned back its flank. It also sent patrols into the rest of the village, which was burning in several places and was being shelled by the artillery of both sides. The patrols reached the cross roads at the south-eastern exit; but, although they had suspicions that there were Germans in the scattered houses beyond, they were not fired on. Gheluvelt was definitely in British hands.

The two companies of the 1/Royal Berkshire in Polygon Wood were now ordered up to secure the left flank of the Scots Guards on the left of the South Wales Borderers, where a gap, caused by the gradual shrinkage of the line,

was threatened by the enemy. As they approached the light railway which runs about a hundred and fifty yards west of the chateau grounds, they were met by heavy fire from the low embankment, but they charged in the dusk and secured it.

Out of a total strength of the four companies of 11 officers and 450 other ranks, the casualties of the Worcestershire on this day were 3 officers and 189 other ranks.

The second successful counter-attack of the 31st October had achieved extraordinary results; for the Germans, though in great numerical superiority, ceased their efforts to capture Gheluvelt. It had its origin in the prearranged plan for the 2nd Division reserves to attack from Polygon Wood southwards; but its brilliant execution was due to the judgment and decision of General FitzClarence, and to the leading and gallantry of the troops entrusted with it. It was not to be the last counter-attack of the day.

#### THE ATTACK ON VELDHOEK. 1ST DIVISION

About the time that the Worcestershire were counter-attacking, the majority of the thirteen German battalions directed on Gheluvelt were either held up by the South Wales Borderers, Scots Guards, Cameron Highlanders and Black Watch, and the guns supporting them, or were lingering in and near Gheluvelt, after wiping out the Queen's and the detachments south of them. A large detachment, however, a kind of advanced guard, with all or part of a battery, pushed westwards—as on the previous day after the capture of Zandvoorde—on the lower ground south of the Menin road, for oblique fire from the South Wales Borderers prevented them from moving north of it. These Germans had not proceeded more than a few hundred yards from the village when they came under fire of Colonel Lovett's small force (the remains of the Gloucestershire, Welch, Queen's, K.R.R.C. and Loyals) in front of Veldhoek, which was supported by the XXXIX. Brigade R.F.A., and now had the 6th Cavalry Brigade, from Hooge, on its immediate right. Lieut.-Colonel Morland, of the Welch, was killed by a shell, and—although for a moment the Germans showed signs of enveloping the right, capturing about this time the headquarters detachment of the Royal Scots Fusiliers on that flank<sup>1</sup>—British gun and rifle fire at

<sup>1</sup> See p. 319.



seven hundred yards proved too much for them, and they were soon seen running back into Gheluvelt in disorder, whether just before or just after the arrival of the Worcestershire in the northern part of the village, is not yet determined. Colonel Lovett's troops, tired as they were, followed in pursuit. One German gun which came into action on the main road was knocked out in single combat by the second round with H.E. shell of a gun brought out to engage it, also on the road, by Lieut. R. Blewitt of the 54th Battery.<sup>1</sup> 31 Oct.

The German account states that "further advance beyond Gheluvelt was prevented by heavy fire from a new and strong position along the edge of the woods west of Gheluvelt. Here a new fortress had been made, which would have to be broken down by our artillery before it could be attacked." Of the heavy—and accurate—fire, there is no doubt, but "the fortress" held by Colonel Lovett and his men consisted of shallow trenches, dug hurriedly with the entrenching implement, without wire or obstacle of any sort.

It was now about 4 P.M., and the German failure near Gheluvelt was complete,<sup>2</sup> but the enemy artillery in this area continued to be most formidable. General Haig, who had ridden forward to see Major-General Landon and Br.-General FitzClarence at the cross roads beyond Hooge, decided, after taking into account the situation further south,<sup>3</sup> that Gheluvelt should for tactical reasons be evacuated at night and a line taken up on the reverse slope west of it. He despatched, as will be narrated later, the 6th Cavalry Brigade to the assistance of Major-General Bulfin. A French light cavalry brigade (General Morel), which came up to Hooge about 5 P.M. by General Dubois's orders, was sent up to follow the 6th Cavalry Brigade after assisting to clear the woods between Veldhoek and Gheluvelt of German stragglers.

After dark therefore the 1st Brigade, with the South Wales Borderers and Worcestershire, was withdrawn to a new line, marked out by the Royal Engineers. The right was on the Menin road about six hundred yards west of Gheluvelt, where it joined on to Colonel Lovett's detach-

<sup>1</sup> The first H.E. had been fired at Ypres a couple of hours earlier. See p. 340, footnote 2.

<sup>2</sup> "S. und G." gives the following formations present at Gheluvelt on the 31st October: *53rd and 54th Reserve Divisions, 33th Landwehr Brigade, 30th Division, parts of 6th Bavarian Reserve Division.*

<sup>3</sup> See p. 337.



ment. General FitzClarence then visited the 2nd Division headquarters, and it was settled that the left of his brigade should connect with the division at the south-west corner of Polygon Wood. The two companies of the Royal Berkshire on the north of Gheluvelt were sent back to the reserve. Before the retirement, all wounded except very severely wounded men who could not be moved, were carried back, and the withdrawal was effected without interference from the enemy. It was not, indeed, until 5 A.M. next day that even scouts of the enemy showed themselves in Gheluvelt.

Following his visit to General Landon, General Haig rode on to 2nd Division headquarters at Westhoek. After consultation with General Monro he decided that the division must fight the battle out where it was. He reiterated the order that all troops possible should be withdrawn into reserve during the night, so that the manœuvre of Gheluvelt could if necessary be repeated.

#### THE FIGHTING ON THE RIGHT WING OF THE I. CORPS (BULFIN'S FORCE AND 7TH DIVISION) AND THE COUNTER-ATTACK OF BULFIN'S FORCE

Map 2.  
Sketch A.

Further south also there had been desperate fighting. On the morning of the 31st October the right wing of the I. Corps, i.e. Major-General Bulfin's force (including Lord Cavan's detachment) and the 7th Division, between the Comines Canal and Gheluvelt, lay across the lower forward slopes of the three spurs marked by Klein Zillebeke, the wood known later on as Shrewsbury Forest, and the group of houses called Tower Hamlets.<sup>1</sup> The directions of the three spurs converge on Zandvoorde, now in possession of the enemy; but as the ground was wooded, this did not give him the great advantage of observation on the British line that he would otherwise have enjoyed, except on the parts of it on the northern and eastern parts of the Tower Hamlets spur, and these he could completely enfilade. Here, too, as elsewhere the trees and woods served to conceal the smallness of the British reserves.

Map 28.  
Sketch  
10.

In accordance with Sir D. Haig's orders,<sup>2</sup> General Moussy's force of five battalions and three batteries, with its right on the Comines Canal, and the six British battalions of Cavan and Bulfin north of it, were to make a counter-

<sup>1</sup> Not marked on map; three-quarters of a mile west of Gheluvelt.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 297.

attack to expel the enemy from Hollebeke Chateau and 31 Oct. Zandvoorde. They were to be supported by the whole of the 7th Divisional and by part of the Cavalry Corps artillery. The attack was to commence at 6.30 A.M.

At this hour only three of the five French battalions, under Lieut.-Colonel Payerne, were available. With them he attacked punctually and passed through Lord Cavan's line; but after an advance of two or three hundred yards, he encountered superior force and determined opposition,<sup>1</sup> well supported by artillery, was enfiladed by troops south of the canal, and could make no further progress.<sup>2</sup> He held on all day under very heavy fire.

The French stopped so soon that General Bulfin's force,<sup>3</sup> which had two companies of the Oxfordshire in reserve behind Zwarteleen, did not leave its trenches. It was obvious that the enemy was too strong, and very soon all idea of a counter-attack was dropped and the troops dug in; for at 8 A.M., here as elsewhere, the Germans began a systematic bombardment.

What remained of the 7th Division was by this date collected on a very small front. The 22nd Brigade was on the right, with the 1/South Staffordshire and 2/Royal Warwickshire in the first line, and 2/Queen's in support; the 21st on the left with the 2/Bedfordshire in front and 2/Green Howards in support.<sup>4</sup> The 20th was in hand one mile east of Zillebeke.

Between the Bedfordshire and the Scots Fusiliers, the next unit northwards, there was a gap of a quarter of a mile, to cover which a company of the former battalion was detached to hold a small wood situated in it. The 20th Brigade (less the 2/Gordon Highlanders with General Bulfin) was ordered to move into a central position in divisional reserve at 6.30 A.M. on the 31st; but during the night, at 1 A.M., the 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border Regiment had been sent up to dig trenches behind the weak left flank of the 7th Division. Thus there remained in reserve, in Herenthage Chateau, only about eighty men representing the 1/Grenadier Guards.

<sup>1</sup> The German *39th Division, XV. Corps*, with three attached *Jäger* battalions, were in the vicinity. "Ypres", p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 56-7.

<sup>3</sup> 2/Grenadier Guards and Irish Guards of the 4th (Guards) Brigade and the 2/Oxfordshire (5th Brigade) under Lord Cavan; 2/Gordon Highlanders of the 20th Brigade; 2/Sussex and 1/Northamptonshire of the 2nd Brigade.

<sup>4</sup> The 2/Wiltshire was still only a cadre, and the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers with the 3rd Brigade.

The German fire soon after 8 A.M. became very heavy ; and so accurate was it on the trenches of the 2/Sussex of Bulfin's force that this battalion was withdrawn to shelter in the woods behind. By 10 A.M. the situation became alarming, as most of the trenches had been badly damaged, and there was no shell-proof cover whatever to which to send the men. The German bombardment continued all the morning, but it was not until 12.25 P.M., nearly two and a half hours after the advance against Gheluvelt, that infantry in great strength, at first in waves and then in groups which gradually coalesced, moved forward against the whole front of Payerne's, Cavan's and Bulfin's groups, and the 7th Division. The junction of the two last, which had been badly enfiladed from Zandvoorde ridge, was at once threatened ; but the situation on the other flank of the 7th Division, where the Germans could be seen streaming forward south of the Ypres—Gheluvelt road towards Hooge, appeared even more perilous. By this time the troops south of Gheluvelt, the Queen's, K.R.R.C., Loyals and Scots Fusiliers, had been swept away, and the detached company of the Bedfordshire in the small wood annihilated. The remainder of the last-named unit held on for a time, but, finally, about 1 P.M., were driven back on to the support line by shell fire and weight of numbers. The Scots Guards and Border Regiment of the 20th Brigade, and the Green Howards, in the second line, less troubled by artillery, held their ground. They simply mowed down the German infantry who came on to within three hundred yards of their trenches, in what to the British seemed closed masses.

Shortly before this, at 12.30 P.M. Captain R. V. Barker, the staff captain of the 22nd Brigade,<sup>1</sup> had come to Major P. J. Foster, commanding the 2/Royal Warwickshire, now reinforced to two hundred all told, and warned him that the Bedfordshire, north of him, were being blown out of their trenches, and that if they went back he was to swing his left to cover that flank, occupy a line of shallow holes that had been dug, and hold on to it at all costs. This line was occupied ; but soon the front line of the 22nd Brigade, being now exposed to enfilade fire, began to give ground, like that of the 21st on its left had done. It was rallied by Major-General Capper and Br.-General Lawford and the divisional and brigade staffs, and led forward again ; and at the same time Br.-General Ruggles-Brise brought

<sup>1</sup> Killed in action later in the day.



up the last reserve, the eighty men of 1/Grenadiers, to 31 Oct. help fill the gap. Such was the fire that the eighty were reduced to fifty before they reached the right of his other two battalions, the Scots Guards and the Border Regiment. But they arrived in the nick of time to assist in shooting down the Germans then coming on in thick masses.

As the 22nd Brigade was being led forward again, the left of General Bulfin's force was, by ill-luck, retiring. At 1.20 P.M., receiving information from Lieut.-Colonel H. M. de F. Montgomery, G.S.O. 1 of the 7th Division, that the 3rd Brigade had fallen back from Gheluvelt, and that the left of the 22nd had also gone, that general assembled the officers commanding the Sussex, Northamptonshire and Gordon Highlanders, for the purpose of making preliminary arrangements for withdrawal to a line to conform with the retirement from Gheluvelt. Before he had given any instructions, Lieut.-Colonel Montgomery again visited him, and informed him definitely that the 22nd Brigade had gone back and that the Germans were following it up. Of this there was no doubt, as they could now see lines of enemy infantry in helmets advancing, close to the trenches lately occupied by the 22nd Brigade. The Royal Sussex on the right of the gap would obviously be outflanked in a few minutes and taken in rear; General Bulfin therefore ordered them to retire by the left, and the Northamptonshire to conform, but to keep touch with Lord Cavan's battalions on their right. Thus he swung back the two battalions about five hundred yards to form a flank, to a line along the front of Shrewsbury Forest, from Groenenburg Farm<sup>1</sup> northwards to a track leading to Hooge. This rearward movement was begun at 1.45 P.M., just as the 22nd Brigade was coming forward again. The situation, once a retirement was begun, rapidly became very serious, and the right of the 7th Division and the left of Bulfin's force soon began to yield again and to drift back into Shrewsbury Forest. General Bulfin, in preparation for moving his headquarters, which were by this time under rifle fire at fairly close range, had sent back his signal section and horses, and for the moment had no means of communicating with the troops in his neighbourhood. He therefore requested Colonel H. S. Jeudwine of the General Staff of the I. Corps, who had ridden down to get informa-

<sup>1</sup> For this farm, which is 1,000 yards east of Klein Zillebeke, see Map 2 and Sketch A.



tion and was proceeding to Lord Cavan's headquarters, to go forward with orders to the Northamptonshire. This battalion, which held a wood protecting his right flank and Lord Cavan's left, was told to stand fast at all costs. General Bulfin then sent back the Gordon Highlanders (some two hundred strong) and half the Sussex, to prepare another position behind the one he now held; and he brought up, on Lord Cavan's left, the two companies of the Oxfordshire, which, while in reserve, had been digging a rear position to guard against a flank attack from the south.

About 3 P.M. General Capper felt it necessary to issue a warning order to his division, in accordance with the 1.30 P.M. instruction from the I. Corps, foreshadowing a retirement to the Klein Zillebeke—Frezenberg line. So much did the British line recede that one battery of the XXV. Brigade R.F.A. found itself in the firing line of infantry and another actually in front of the infantry; and about 3.30 P.M. when Colonel Jeudwine returned to General Bulfin from Lord Cavan's headquarters by his earlier route, he met a party of Germans, and only escaped them by his knowledge of the woodland tracks. This party was accounted for by a company of the Royal Sussex posted in reserve.

In every direction men in spiked helmets could now be seen streaming forward, and the noise of gun fire was terrific. The situation looked desperate, but the British commanders did not despair, and it soon became evident that the enemy's progress was slowing. The German units had been broken up by the advance under fire, and were obviously without much guidance from officers, most of whom had fallen. General Bulfin decided on a last counter-attack, and asked Colonel Jeudwine, on his return journey to I. Corps headquarters, to send back the 2/Gordon Highlanders, which was three-quarters of a mile in rear. He then informed the Sussex and Northamptonshire that reinforcements were arriving, and ordered them, when they heard cheering behind them, to give the enemy the "mad minute"—one minute's rapid rifle fire—and when the reinforcements reached them, to get up and with the bayonet clear the enemy out of his position. The reinforcements, when they shortly afterwards appeared, were not the two hundred—which indeed included transport men and cooks—expected but only about eighty men in all of the 2/Gordon Highlanders under the giant Captain

J. R. E. Stansfeld.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately the woods concealed their 31 Oct. weakness. Informing them of the part they were to play, General Bulfin gave the signal to advance. Then, as the Gordon Highlanders yelled and moved forward, the thin and exhausted firing line of the Sussex and Northamptonshire, under Lt.-Colonels E. W. B. Green and E. O. Smith, broke into one great roar and crackle of rapid independent fire. To the Germans it must have seemed as if dozens of machine guns had suddenly been brought into action against them; and, as they began to waver, the two battalions, with the Highlanders, were up and into them with the bayonet. The Oxfordshire, under Lieut.-Colonel H. R. Davies, on the right, waited until the counter-attack came up level with them, and then joined in. The Royal Dragoons of the 6th Cavalry Brigade also arrived just in time to take part, on foot, in the charge on the left. Colonel Jeudwine on returning to I. Corps headquarters at the White Chateau, had learnt that General Haig had ridden forward along the Menin road towards Hooze,<sup>2</sup> and following him up, found him near No. 4 kilometre stone. He reported the situation of General Bulfin and Lord Cavan. Sir D. Haig called up General Byng, and gave him orders to take the 6th Cavalry Brigade to join in the counter-attack. Guided by Colonel Jeudwine to the left of Bulfin's front, thus it was that the Royals with the 10th Hussars and Northumberland Hussars in support reached the scene of the counter-attack.

The effect of the sudden advance of the Sussex, Northamptonshire, Gordon Highlanders, Oxfordshire and Royals was far beyond belief; it had certainly been well prepared by fire, for the enemy dead were found lying in heaps on the ground traversed. A few Germans who stood and fought were easily dealt with: the rest turned and fled in confusion. Not only was the front covered by the counter-attack cleared, but its effects extended northwards to the Germans attacking the 7th Division. General Bulfin's one fear was that in the excitement of the moment his men would never stop. Actually, they went forward close on half a mile, meeting only with isolated resistance, before they could be brought to a halt and the line somewhat re-established. The latest reinforcement, the 26th Field Company R.E., which lost forty men in its advance,

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently mortally wounded at the Battle of Loos, when in command of the 2/Gordon Highlanders.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 331.

filled a gap between the Oxfordshire and the Northamptonshire.

A general forward movement of the 7th Division also took place, so that the greater part of the ground lost in the morning was recovered and secured before German resistance stiffened. Two machine guns in some houses that overlooked the line particularly disturbed the British. A gun of C Battery R.H.A. (7th Division) was brought up within a hundred yards of the firing line and man-handled into it by the gunners and some of the Royals, under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, and a shell at once sent into the nearest house. It was sufficient, for it brought the Germans and their machine guns out of the others. The detached wood lying south-east of Shrewsbury Forest was found to be strongly held. Two organized attacks were made on this, the second with success; but it was now 5.30 p.m. and dark, and the men had been without food all day. General Bulfin realized that the Germans could not be driven further back without heavy losses to his already skeleton battalions. He came to the conclusion that he must call a halt and hold for the night the southern and eastern edges of Shrewsbury Forest, connecting on the right by the Oxfordshire with the original front held by Lord Cavan's two Guards battalions, and on the left with the 7th Division. The front of this division was adjusted to curve back a little and then forward again through the Herenthage Woods to join up with the 3rd Brigade and 1st (Guards) Brigade west of Gheluelvt. The 20th Brigade was now on the right, and the 21st on the left, with the 22nd in reserve. The taking up of the new line during darkness, in a wooded country and in close proximity to the enemy, was no easy task; but it was successfully accomplished, and even half rations and water were got up to the front.

The day's losses had been very heavy. Unfortunately only a few of the battalions of the 7th Division record their strengths on the evening of the 31st. These are available for the 20th Brigade, but its battalions, except one, the Gordon Highlanders, were not in the front trenches until the afternoon. The brigade in question, instead of four thousand infantry, had but 940, including transport men and cooks, made up as follows:—1/Grenadier Guards, 205; 2/Scots Guards, 255; 2/Border Regiment, 275; 2/Gordon Highlanders, 205, each battalion having only five officers. The 21st Brigade, reduced to 750 of which the 2/Bedfordshire



counted 370, had now practically only two battalions, for 31 Oct. the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers had only some hundred and eighty fighting men at the beginning of the day, and these were nearly all killed or captured, whilst the 2/Wiltshire had been annihilated earlier. Complete figures are not available for the 22nd Brigade, but the 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers had been destroyed on the 30th; the 2/Royal Warwickshire only mustered 10 officers and 160 men on the morning of the 31st, and lost most of these; and the 2/Queen's had heavy casualties both on the 30th and 31st. The total, therefore, cannot have been more than eight hundred.

Of the troops that fought in front of Gheluvelt,<sup>1</sup> the 1/Queen's had only about fifty men; the 2/Welch, 70; the 1/Scots Guards, 105; the 1/South Wales Borderers, 204; the 2/Worcestershire, 260; 2/K.R.R.C., 150; and the 1/Loyal North Lancashire mustered only 1 officer and 35 other ranks. With General Bulfin, the 2/Royal Sussex had 405 casualties on the 30th and 31st. Thus, allowing for the fact that not one of the battalions was up to establishment when it arrived in Flanders,<sup>2</sup> and that all had lost men daily and received few reinforcements, the average of the 1st and 7th Divisions on the evening of the 31st October was probably far less than a quarter of what it should have been.

#### THE FIGHTING ON THE LEFT WING OF THE I. CORPS 2ND DIVISION

During the whole of the 31st October the six battalions of the 2nd Division in the front line:—2/Coldstream, 3/Coldstream, 2/Connaught Rangers, 2/Highland L.I., 2/South Staffordshire and 1/K.R.R.C., maintained their positions between the left of the 1st (Guards) Brigade near Polygon Wood and the right of the French IX. Corps near Zonnebeke. They had the 1/King's and 1/Royal Berkshire in reserve, under Colonel C. B. Westmacott, and in the course of the day—as already narrated—the former battalion was used to strengthen the right of the division when the 1st (Guards) Brigade was desperately engaged near Gheluvelt. The Royal Berkshire were broken up,

Map 28.  
Sketch  
10.

<sup>1</sup> These figures are exclusive of transport men and cooks, not in the fighting line and averaging about one hundred per battalion.

<sup>2</sup> From A. and Q. records, the battalions of the 1st Division, including transport men, etc., averaged 934 on the 19th October 1914.



two companies becoming the sole divisional reserve and eventually following up the 2/Worcestershire counter-attack; the other two went to support the 6th Brigade.

During the moonlight in the early hours of the night of the 30th/31st October—the full moon was two days later—the enemy was observed massing in front of the South Staffordshire and K.R.R.C., but no serious attack developed: the 53rd and 54th Reserve Divisions opposite the 2nd Division had evidently been fought out, and were easily kept quiet by artillery fire alone. About 11.30 A.M. on the 31st the Connaught Rangers complained of “a sort of howitzer” which was dropping shells on to them from the enemy’s trench 300 yards in front of their right. This was the first time a *Minenwerfer* had actually been seen opposite the British.<sup>1</sup> The 70th Battery ran up a gun by hand behind a hedge and with the first shot, with a new high-explosive shell,<sup>2</sup> knocked the weapon out and killed a number of the enemy who showed signs of attacking. “A few more shells from the gun into some houses near “quieted the enemy thereabouts for the rest of the day”, says the 6th Brigade war diary.

About 2 P.M. the 6th Brigade received the message from 2nd Division headquarters that the enemy’s leading troops had gained the western exits of Gheluvelt, and that General Fanshawe was to withdraw into reserve all the troops he could. Orders were therefore prepared to pull out the majority of companies from the front line, leaving a thin screen of troops in position. These arrangements were explained to the staff officer of the French IX. Corps who was with the 6th Brigade. He conceived that they were the preliminaries of a retirement and urged that the abandonment of a well-established position would have a disastrous moral effect both on British and French. The incident possibly led to the report current among the French staff that Sir John French had issued orders for a retirement, even to the west of Ypres. Fortunately,

<sup>1</sup> They had been used previously, according to German accounts, at the siege of Liège and at Dixmude, and had come to the knowledge of the British Intelligence Section early in October on the Aisne. They were, on this day, as already mentioned, also used at Messines.

<sup>2</sup> The brigade war diary states that 25 rounds of H.E. had been issued to the battery a few days previously. Although some rounds had been fired by the 49th Battery, XL. Brigade, 3rd Division, near Aubers on the 23rd October, this seems to have been the first use of it at Ypres. The first H.E. shell for the 18-pdr. field gun had been sent across the Channel on the 19th October; until that date the field guns had nothing but shrapnel.

after the charge of the Worcestershire, there was no occasion for General Fanshawe to put the warning order into execution. 31 Oct.

About 7 P.M. Br.-General FitzClarence made his visit to 2nd Division headquarters, when he explained that the 1st Division was about to be withdrawn west of Gheluvelt, in conformity with what had been agreed on after the recapture of the village. As the 1st (Guards) Brigade now connected with the 2nd Division at the south-west corner of Polygon Wood, the south-east corner became a salient. A couple of hours later, in view of the enemy attacks north-east of Ypres near Zonnebeke having died down, arrangements were made with the French IX. Corps for a brigade of the French 6th Cavalry Division attached to it to take over the front of the 1/K.R.R.C.—the left battalion of the British line—so that this unit could be withdrawn into divisional reserve for use if required further south.

It has not been possible in the limited space available to mention more than isolated instances of the action of the artillery. The batteries were so well placed<sup>1</sup> that they suffered little from the enemy's fire, although the 116th and 117th Batteries of the XXVI. Brigade stuck so long to their positions behind Gheluvelt that they received infantry fire at close range. On the previous day all batteries had been ordered to husband ammunition; but of their fire effect, of which the enemy is the best judge, the German official account states: "British and French shells fell long distances behind our lines, blocking streets and bridges, and devastating villages as far back as the Lys, so that any regular transport of rations and ammunition to the front became impossible".<sup>2</sup>

#### GENERAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH

The information that came in during the day was important; not only was the German *XV. Corps* located, but also both regiments of the *51st Infantry Brigade, 26th Division, XIII. Corps*. General von Fabeck was now known to be in command of a group attacking between the *Fourth* and *Sixth Armies*, and it was suspected that the whole of the *XIII. Corps*, of which he was the commander, must have arrived. The *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*

Map 28.  
Sketch  
10.

<sup>1</sup> The positions are shown on Map 27 and Sketch 11.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 72.

was again identified, but the presence of the *II. Bavarian Corps* was not detected.

Observation conditions were perfect on the 31st, and the Royal Flying Corps brought in a good deal of valuable information as regards the position of batteries and trenches; but of strategic intelligence the only item of importance was that a strong column had been seen marching to Houthem ( $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles south-east of Hollebeke) from the assembly place of troops near Comines reported on the previous day.<sup>1</sup>

After leaving General Haig at the White Chateau and learning as he reached his car that Gheluveld had been recaptured, Sir John French proceeded via Ypres towards Cassel to visit General Foch. As he passed through Poperinghe, he was recognized by a French staff officer, who informed him that General Foch was at General d'Urbal's battle headquarters there, and a meeting, by which much time was saved, took place at once.

General Foch, as ever, proposed to remedy the situation by attacking: he promised to arrange for counter-attacks to be made on the right and left of the I. Corps at day-break next day by six battalions (32nd Division) and eight batteries of the XVI. Corps, and by part of the IX. Corps, respectively. This information was sent to General Haig with a note from Sir John French, timed 3.35 P.M., as follows:—

“It is of the *utmost importance* to hold the ground you are on now. It is useless for me to say this because I know you will do it if it is humanly possible.

“I will see if it is possible to send you any more support myself when I reach headquarters [St. Omer].  
“I will then finally arrange with Foch *what* our future rôle is to be.”

Enclosed with the note was a memorandum by General Foch, timed 3.5 P.M., which may be thus translated:—

“It is absolutely imperative that no retirement is made, and to that end to dig in on the ground on which you happen to be.

“This does not prevent you from organizing a rear position which should connect with our IX. Corps at Zonnebeke.

“But every movement rearwards made by a considerable body of troops ensures an advance of the enemy and certain disorder among the retiring troops.  
“This must absolutely be prevented.

<sup>1</sup> Part of the *II. Bavarian Corps*.



"The 2nd Division seems to have been able to hold 31 Oct.

"its own near Zonnebeke in liaison with our IX. Corps." <sup>1</sup>

After Sir John French had left, General Foch issued orders to the IX. Corps, and forwarded a copy of them to G.H.Q. St. Omer. They ran:—

"The I. Corps and Rawlinson's division [the 7th] should hold and solidly organize the position from the right of the French IX. Corps to Klein Zillebeke.

"On their left the French IX. Corps will attack in the direction Becelaere and eastwards.

"The French troops of General d'Urbal (six battalions and eight batteries) will attack from the front St. Eloi—Wytshaete against Hollebeke.

"New French troops (four battalions of chasseurs) <sup>2</sup> and other battalions and batteries will arrive during the morning.

"The battalions of the IX. Corps [Moussy's force] already put at the disposal of General Douglas Haig will either be launched to the attack or will be returned to General d'Urbal."

These orders were transmitted to the I. Corps and Cavalry Corps at 9 P.M. in the form of secret instructions, <sup>3</sup> with the addition that the Cavalry Corps was to be prepared to allow the French to pass through its line; and that both I. Corps and Cavalry Corps were to assist the French to the utmost of their power and seize every opportunity of assuming the offensive.

General Haig had already issued orders at 7 P.M. to his three divisions and the 3rd Cavalry Division <sup>4</sup> to hold their positions, and be prepared to join in an offensive which the French were to make on their flanks. If the 3rd Cavalry Division could be withdrawn without leaving a gap—this proved to be possible—it was to be sent back into reserve. No further instructions were therefore necessary.

Sir John French did not telegraph home any report of the situation on the 31st. He wired twice that he was in great anxiety about ammunition supply, pointing out that stocks were running down and at the present rate of expenditure he was certain, before long, to run short. He also reported in detail the German forces which he estimated were in front of the seven British and two Indian divisions and his three cavalry divisions, viz. six and a half

<sup>1</sup> No enemy attack, as we have seen, was made on it.

<sup>2</sup> Brigade Olleris of the 43rd Division (Palat, viii. p. 211).

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 40.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 41.



corps and eight cavalry divisions. This it is now known was not quite all; he might have included the *II. Bavarian Corps*, and the *2nd Ersatz Brigade*, *37th* and *38th Landwehr Brigades* and the *Marine Division*, portions at least of which had been opposite the British. He gave no forecast of the reinforcements that the enemy might bring up. There were actually the equivalent of over eight German corps against nine British and Indian divisions, and eight German cavalry divisions against three; whilst five more German divisions were en route for Flanders, and some of the five divisions opposite the Belgians were becoming available for employment further south.

To redress the nearly two to one superiority reported to him, the Secretary of State could do no more than promise to send six more battalions of selected Territorials and suggest that the French should be asked for artillery assistance.

During the day the Indian Corps had continued the relief of the *II. Corps*. The latter had sent two battalions of the *13th Brigade* by motor bus and two of the *9th Brigade* by march to the Cavalry Corps; <sup>1</sup> it further left the *8th* and *14th Brigades* and three infantry battalions with the Indian Corps, besides much of its artillery, as that of the Indian Corps had not all arrived.<sup>2</sup> The remainder of the *II. Corps*, tired out and very weak in numbers, went into billets near Hazebrouck.

On the right of Allenby's cavalry corps, the *4th Division* had completely held its own.

To the left of the British there is little to record. The French *IX. Corps* had not pressed an attack, as its reserves had been sent to assist the British. General de Mitry's force recaptured Bixschoote. There had been no attack on the Belgians.

The only important French reinforcements in sight were the *39th* and *11th Divisions (XX. Corps)*, which were being brought from Lorraine to the Flanders front.

The orders of Generals d'Urbal and Dubois for the 1st November <sup>3</sup> were for General Taverna (*XVI. Corps*) with his *32nd Division (General Bouchez)*,<sup>4</sup> the corps troops of

<sup>1</sup> See page 222.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VII.

<sup>3</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 56, 60.

<sup>4</sup> The *32nd Division*, coming from Compiègne was originally intended to relieve de Mitry's force near Boesinghe and Bixschoote north of Ypres. The leading brigade (Woillemont) was just arriving when it was ordered south-east of Ypres to St. Eloi. One battalion each of the *53rd* and *80th*

the XVI. Corps and the 9th Cavalry Division (General de 31 Oct. l'Espée), to attack against Houthem. They were to start from the front Wytschaete—St. Eloi, that is the left wing of Allenby's cavalry corps. General Moussy's detachment on the north side of the canal was to assist; General Bernard<sup>1</sup> with four battalions and six batteries of the IX. Corps was to attack on the left of the British I. Corps, from Zonnebeke, against Becelaere. The rest of the IX. Corps, the 31st Division and 7th Cavalry Division, were to maintain an offensive attitude. General Humbert with the XXXII. Corps (42nd and 38th Divisions), whilst keeping firm hold of Dixmude, was also to attack eastwards on either side of that town.

Thus, three French counter-attacks were to be made the next day; but it was a question whether the line of battered and ever-diminishing British battalions and squadrons, patched in places by French reinforcements, could continue to hold on. In hastily-dug trenches they had to stand punishment from over two hundred German heavy guns; and at the same time, without any obstacles to cover them except on the 2nd Division front, to keep back the ever-increasing weight of the German infantry. With infantry brigades reduced below the establishment of battalions, and cavalry regiments below that of squadrons, with only some thirty medium heavy guns—some of which were obsolete—and with the imminent danger of lack of gun ammunition, the future looked gloomy and doubtful. The sin of unpreparedness for war of the British nation was indeed being visited on its children, the men and officers of the British Expeditionary Force. Should what remained of them, war-worn and hungry, fall back even a few miles, it was difficult to see how the Channel ports could be saved.

#### SITUATION OF THE B.E.F., NORTH OF THE LYS, ON THE NIGHT OF THE 31ST OCTOBER/1ST NOVEMBER

The distribution of Allied troops north of the Lys on the evening of the 31st October/1st November was:—

Map 28.  
Sketch  
10.

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Regiments were left with de Mitry, but the rest of the division was diverted and moved on St. Eloi, the four remaining battalions of Woillemont's brigade, with two artillery groups, leading.

<sup>1</sup> This officer visited 2nd Divisional headquarters at midnight to work out the arrangements for the counter-attack.

## British :

4th Division (less two battalions, south of the Lys). Armentières to outskirts of Messines.

## Cavalry Corps :

1st Cavalry Division.

2nd Cavalry Brigade

Oxfordshire Hussars

2/K.O.S.B.

2/K.O.Y.L.I.

1st Cavalry Brigade

57th Rifles

Messines.

Behind the 2nd Cavalry Brigade.

2nd Cavalry Division.

4th Cavalry Brigade

5th Cavalry Brigade

London Scottish

3rd Cavalry Brigade . . .

From near Messines through Wyttschaete to near Hollebeke.

Behind 4th and 5th Cavalry Brigades.

2 battalions of Shaw's Group

129th Baluchis . . . .

In reserve at Kimmel.

Behind 4th and 5th Cavalry Brigades.

## French :

Woillemont's Brigade of 32nd Division (four battalions with six batteries).

9th Cavalry Division.

Rest of 32nd Division . . .

Moussy's detachment, 1 battalion front line, 4 battalions in support . . .

Between 5th Cavalry Brigade and angle of canal.

Approaching Wyttschaete.

North of Comines Canal.

## British :

Bulfin's Force

Cavan's Group :

Irish Guards

2/Oxfordshire L.I.

2/Grenadier Guards . . .

Klein Zillebeke.

In support. (They had been relieved at night by the French.)

Bulfin's Group :

2/Royal Sussex

1/Northamptonshire

2/Gordon Highlanders

East edge of Shrewsbury Forest.

7th Division :

20th Brigade (940 strong)

21st Brigade<sup>1</sup>

22nd Brigade . . . .

Herenthage Wood.

In reserve behind 20th and 21st.

<sup>1</sup> Two battalions only: 2/Wiltshire and 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers practically non-existent.

31 Oct.

1st Division :

3rd Brigade, <sup>1</sup> with 1/Loyal North Lancashire and 2/K.R.R.C. of the 2nd.	} Across Menin Road opposite Gheluvelt.
1st (Guards) Brigade . . .	

From left of 3rd Brigade  
to south-west corner of  
Polygon Wood.

3rd Cavalry Division . . .	} In reserve, 6th Cavalry Brigade, with a brigade of the French 6th Cavalry Division, Hooze ; 7th Cavalry Brigade, Zille- beke.
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2nd Division :

1/King's (6th Brigade)	} South-west corner of Poly- gon Wood to right of French IX. Corps east of Zonnebeke.
2/Coldstream ) (4th (Guards)	
3/Coldstream ) Brigade	
2/Connaught Rangers ) (5th	
2/Highland L.I. ) Brigade	

2/Worcestershire 1/Royal Berkshire 1/K.R.R.C.	} In divisional reserve and brigade reserve.
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## NOTE

## THE GERMANS ON THE 31ST OCTOBER

Although Fabeck's *Army Group* received a warm message of Map 28. praise from the Kaiser on the evening of the 31st October, the Sketch official account admits its objective had not been attained. In 10. fact very little ground had been gained—practically none except part of Messines—until the British evacuated Gheluvelt and the line in the vicinity of the village was withdrawn.<sup>2</sup> It was decided to continue the main pressure against Messines—Wytshacte, and to avoid the heavy losses incurred in day fighting owing to the deadly accuracy of British rifle fire, by resort to the expedient of a night attack. Yet very little night work had been done by the German Army in peace training, and previous attempts of this nature—at Liège, Verdun (during the battle of the Marne), and against the Grand Couronné de Nancy—had been disastrous failures.

<sup>1</sup> The 1/Queen's and 1/L.N. Lancashire were practically non-existent.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 83.



## CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. THE BATTLE OF GHELUVELT

1ST NOVEMBER 1914

THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S *ARMY GROUP* (*continued*)

(Maps 1, 2, 26, 28, 29 ; Sketches A, 12)

### THE EVACUATION OF MESSINES

Map 1. SUNDAY, the 1st November, did not prove to be one of the critical days at Ypres ; yet anxiety was never relaxed during its course. Desperate struggles took place on the right and in the centre of the British line, and Messines was abandoned. None of the French counter-attacks ordered by General Foch achieved any sensible progress ; but, daunted perhaps by the arrival of a few fresh troops and the very boldness of their action, the enemy did not come on with his previous determination and gained little advantage. To conceal the meagreness of the results attained during the day—thereby accentuating the failure—the German official account transfers to the 1st November some of the events of the previous twenty-four hours :—the fighting with Indian troops ; the capture of the wood north of Zandvoorde ; and the gain of ground near Gheluvelt<sup>1</sup> by the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, whose only attempt to advance on the 1st November was repulsed without difficulty.

One interesting event of the day was the interception of German wireless messages announcing the intended arrival of the Kaiser at Courtrai at 2 P.M., at the headquarters of the *4th Cavalry Division*—thought to be at Gheluwe—at 3 P.M., and later at Hollebeke. It is now known that he did not come quite so near the front, and spent the

<sup>1</sup> " Ypres ", pp. 83, 84.



# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

SKETCH 12.

1<sup>ST</sup> - 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1914.



day visiting the cavalry divisions in rest billets in Courtrai, 1 Nov. Aelbeke (4 miles south of Courtrai) and Bondues (4 miles north of Lille). The intercepted messages were circulated to the troops of the B.E.F., and the places through which the Kaiser was expected to pass were shelled, if within range, and bombed by our air-craft.<sup>1</sup>

During the course of the 1st November Lord Kitchener came over to France and met the French President and Generals Joffre and Foch at Dunkirk.<sup>2</sup> Sir John French was unable to attend the conference, which turned mainly on the question of mutual assistance, but he sent his Military Secretary, Br.-Gen. Hon. W. Lambton, and his A.D.C., Lieut.-Colonel S. L. Barry, to explain the situation to the Secretary of State for War. It was on this occasion that the French high authorities accepted alike Lord Kitchener's estimate of the duration of the war and the programme he unfolded to them as to the contribution in troops which England would make to the Allied cause. The Secretary of State for War told the President and the generals—and told them very distinctly—that to send untrained men to the fighting line was little short of murder, that no very important supply of British effectives could be looked for till the late Spring, 1915, but he also said that from then onwards there would be a ceaseless flow of reinforcements, and that, finally, the British Army would touch its high-water mark during the summer of 1917.

THE RIGHT: THE 4TH DIVISION, CAVALRY CORPS AND  
FRENCH 32ND DIVISION. THE NIGHT ATTACK ON  
WYTSCHAETE AND THE WITHDRAWAL FROM MESSINES

From midnight onward, in bright moonlight, the British trenches and all buildings between Messines and Wytschaete were steadily shelled by the enemy "for destructive effect", whilst a battery of 8-inch howitzers devoted its whole attention to Wytschaete.<sup>3</sup>

Map 26.  
Sketch  
12.

At 1 A.M. on the 1st November nine battalions of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* advanced against Wytschaete, which was occupied by the Composite Household Cavalry

<sup>1</sup> The R.F.C. had a fair supply of 20 lb. bombs.

<sup>2</sup> An account of the conference will be found in M. Poincaré's preface to the French translation of Sir George Arthur's "Life of Lord Kitchener", pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>3</sup> "Fusilier Regt. No. 122", p. 41 and map 9. This regiment had ten companies deployed opposite the interval between the two named villages; the other two companies were engaged in the attack on Messines.



Regiment, 415 fighting strength, of the 4th Cavalry Brigade. The *17th Bavarian Reserve Regiment* attacked from the east and the *21st* from the south-east, followed by the *12th*.<sup>1</sup> At the same time a general attack, in several lines, developed against Messines ridge between the windmill, three quarters of a mile north of Messines, and Wyttschaete—a sector held by the 6th Dragoon Guards and part of the London Scottish. Owing to the small number of men available<sup>2</sup> the line was held as usual by a series of posts or groups, and was not continuous.

The British fire was steady, and for a time the Germans were held off; but weight of numbers told, as ever in night fighting. The odds at Wyttschaete were six battalions against 415 men, probably twelve to one. Further south there were ten German companies against about six hundred men, probably three to one. On the open ridge the enemy was able to penetrate in large numbers through the gaps in the line, attack the groups of defenders from flank and rear, and even surround some of them. The timely charge of a reserve company of the London Scottish, ordered by Colonel Malcolm, and the successful resistance of one squadron, in particular, of the Carabiniers, enabled possession of the top of the ridge to be maintained, with the general result that on the right the British held their original trenches, and on the left they fell back a little to the line of the Messines—Wyttschaete road. But the infiltration of Germans through the gaps continued, and—although a company of the London Scottish was now disposed behind the line to deal with intruders—as daylight approached some of the groups of defenders, seeing their flanks turned and their position practically surrounded, fought their way back instead of waiting to be captured. The last to go were two squadrons of the Carabiniers with some detachments of the London Scottish who remained in their trenches until 6.45 A.M.<sup>3</sup> By 7.35 A.M. the Germans

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 78, and "Bavaria", p. 143. British accounts make the attack a little later.

<sup>2</sup> 6th Dragoon Guards, 294 rifles strong, with part of the London Scottish, about 300, on their left. The rest of this battalion filled the space on the right of the Carabiniers, having been used to fill a gap between the windmill and Messines. The record of the *122nd Regiment*, p. 41, gives the detail that its companies worked forward in groups under covering fire of guns and rifles.

<sup>3</sup> The London Scottish war diary contains the statement that fifty per cent. of the rifles were useless for rapid fire owing to the defective magazines of the old Mark I. Lee-*Metford* with which they and all other Territorial infantry were then armed. This statement was confirmed on Ordnance examination.

were in possession of the middle part of Messines ridge, and 1 Nov. its late occupants were re-forming at Hill 75 (Spanbroekmolen) on the main ridge four thousand yards east of Kemmel Hill, and separated from Messines ridge by the Steenbeek valley.<sup>1</sup>

Even earlier had Wytsehaete fallen to the enemy. About 2.45 A.M. he forced his way into the village by sheer weight of numbers and drove the four hundred men of the Composite Regiment back to the southern and western edges. North of the village, the 20th Hussars of the 5th Cavalry Brigade held on. Immediate measures were taken to regain possession of Wytsehaete; not being co-ordinated, they proved unsuccessful at first, but eventually resulted in the expulsion of the enemy. As soon as the first advance into the village was reported, Br.-General Sir P. Chetwode (5th Cavalry Brigade), despatched his reserve, the 12th Lancers, to counter-attack from a hillock on the north of the village. But in the confusion of night operations the advanced guard of the 12th—after pushing through both French and British troops—reached the hillock only to be fired into from two sides, probably by Allies as well as German troops. Further effort was therefore abandoned until daylight.

Soon after the attack on Wytsehaete commenced, Major-General H. Gough (2nd Cavalry Division), had ordered up the two battalions of the 9th Brigade of the II. Corps which were at his disposal at Kemmel. Br.-General Shaw immediately turned out his men, who had come from the south by march route, and sent off the 1/Lincolnshire, 800 strong, followed by the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers, 350 strong. The two battalions, though worn out with fighting and marching, were on the move within fifteen minutes of the receipt of orders. On arrival within a quarter of a mile of Wytsehaete, at the request of Br.-General Hon. C. Bingham (4th Cavalry Brigade), an immediate attack was made by the Lincolnshire and half the Fusiliers, with the 3rd Hussars in support. But the Germans were now in possession, and received the attack with heavy rifle fire from the houses and from a sunken road on the west side of the village. Confused in the

<sup>1</sup> It is somewhat remarkable that the history of the *122nd Regiment*, p. 41, states that Messines ridge was not captured until 11.30 A.M., when it was taken by assault by nine of its companies. "Ypres", p. 85, makes it even later, and says that it was not "until evening of 1st November", after the whole of Messines village had been secured. The British evacuated Messines at 9 A.M., as will be related.

dim light by orders to retire, possibly shouted by the enemy, the companies of the 9th Brigade, after charging to within a few paces of his position, fell back some two hundred yards to a fold of the ground. Two companies of the advanced guard of the French 32nd Division moving down the Vierstraat road, which enters Wyttschaete from the north-west, also failed to drive back the Germans.

Seeing, as daylight approached, that the cavalry and London Scottish on his right were retiring, Lieut.-Colonel W. E. B. Smith, commanding the Lincolnshire—though wounded—decided to hold on to cover their withdrawal. He was successful in his purpose, but at heavy cost. His men were pounded by German artillery in front and enfiladed by infantry who had crept round the flanks. When eventually he ordered the withdrawal, owing to the bad musketry of the enemy the operation was accomplished, although it was by that time broad daylight, with surprisingly few casualties. Nevertheless, in the few hours' fighting, the Lincolnshire had lost 8 officers and 293 other ranks, and the Northumberland Fusiliers 5 officers and 93 other ranks, totals representing about 30 per cent of the men present; but they had put up a fight worthy of the best traditions of the British Army.

About 8 A.M., the attention of the six German battalions being mainly directed to the west, the 12th Lancers, with a squadron of the 20th Hussars, renewed their efforts against the north of Wyttschaete and broke in there. Before the Germans could recover from their surprise the head of the French 32nd Division again advanced from the north-west driving all before it. Thus the village was recaptured and entirely cleared of the enemy. The German official account attributes the reverse to the heavy artillery continuing to shell the village after it had been taken, which compelled the colonel of the *17th Bavarian Reserve Regiment* at 5 A.M. "to withdraw his victorious troops temporarily", and to the *21st Bavarian Reserve Regiment* during this retirement firing into their comrades of the *17th*. It is admitted, however, that Wyttschaete and the high ground near had to be abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

The French 32nd Division was now arriving near Wyttschaete in force. General Taverna leaving Woillemont's detachment (four battalions and two groups of artillery) immediately south of the canal, had directed General Bouchez with eight battalions and seven groups

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 78-9; "Bavaria", p. 143.



of artillery to come up on its right, with the French 9th Cavalry Division covering his own right flank. The French then relieved the brigades of the 2nd Cavalry Division in succession. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade went to Spanbroekmolen behind the right of the French 32nd Division, the 5th to Kimmel and then to Vierstraat behind the centre of the 32nd Division, and the 4th back to West-outré. The infantry attached to the division was assembled close to the 4th Cavalry Brigade, around Locre. The 32nd Division then occupied the original front of the 2nd Cavalry Division from the left of the 1st Cavalry Division to the canal. It may be added that the French could make no further progress; the detachment next to the canal was "powerless" to advance, as the division was opposed by the greater part of two divisions, the *3rd Bavarian*, south of the canal near Hollebeke, and the *6th Bavarian Reserve*, near Wytschaete.<sup>1</sup> Towards noon, indeed, the Bavarians renewed their attack on Wytschaete and about 4 P.M. again entered the eastern part of the village; but they were again forced to evacuate it. This second reverse is attributed to the French bringing up two fresh divisions.<sup>2</sup> No such reinforcement arrived, and there was still only part of the 32nd Division with the 9th Cavalry Division to engage the two German divisions on this part of the front.

During the heavy fighting at Wytschaete in the early morning there had been comparative calm at Messines. At nightfall on the 31st October the eastern half of the village had been held by the German *26th Division* and the western half by the 1st Cavalry Division and its attached infantry. Although, in the course of the night, General Allenby had given General de Lisle discretion to evacuate the village during darkness, provided he maintained the defence of the ridge northwards of it, at daybreak the 1st Cavalry Division was still holding the western portion. When, about 7.30 A.M., it was discovered that the Germans had driven off the 4th Cavalry Brigade and occupied not only the centre of Messines ridge, but the valley west of it, General de Lisle gave orders for a retirement to be made at 9 A.M.<sup>3</sup> to the next ridge half a mile east of Wulverghem, marked by the Kruisstraat Cabaret cross roads, but generally known as Wulverghem ridge.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> The interval of 1½ hours was allowed for the orders to reach the artillery and all squadrons.

<sup>4</sup> This cabaret is half a mile south-east of Spanbroekmolen.



To leave his troops in Messines at the southern end of the ridge when the northern part of it was in enemy hands was merely to expose them to certain capture. The London Scottish, who had now re-formed, dug in on Wulverghem ridge to cover the withdrawal.

This retirement from Messines was carried out deliberately and the enemy did not follow. The German official account that the British were cleared out of the village "after fierce street fighting had gone on throughout the day"<sup>1</sup> has no foundation in fact. After the evacuation had been completed the village and its approaches were shelled by the British artillery, including a field brigade of the 4th Division on Hill 63 near Ploegsteert Wood, and this proved sufficient to prevent any further advance on the part of the German infantry.

At night the line of the 1st Cavalry Division—held by the 1st Cavalry Brigade and three squadrons of the 2nd—ran about two thousand yards behind the morning line from the Douve to the Kruisstraat Cabaret, whence it was continued by the French. The 2/K.O.S.B. and 2/K.O.Y.L.I. of the 5th Division were, at 8 P.M., sent back by General Allenby to Neuve Eglise. Considering the very superior force—three infantry divisions concentrated against the two divisions of the Cavalry Corps—the result of the three days fighting was far from unsatisfactory, but the whole of Messines ridge, from the point where it leaves the main Ypres ridge at Wyttschaete, had been lost. The main position, Wyttschaete—Hill 63—Ploegsteert, though badly overlooked from Messines, was still intact, and time had been given for French assistance to arrive. The only sinister sign was the confidential warning sent by G.H.Q. to the horse artillery batteries that they must economize ammunition. Late on this day the cavalry at last received some full-sized entrenching tools: 450 shovels and 200 picks for each division.

Map 29.  
Sketch  
12.

To conform with the cavalry retirement from Messines, the 4th Division on Allenby's right ordered the Inniskilling Fusiliers to withdraw south of the Douve, and turn their left flank back parallel to that stream. Owing, however, to the battalion runners failing to get through, two companies remained all day in shallow wet trenches on the original position, and achieved, as will be seen, a decided triumph. To fill the gap of nearly a mile between the Inniskillings and the right of the 1st Cavalry Division,

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 85.

Major-General H. F. M. Wilson had only the divisional 1 Nov. squadron of the 19th Hussars available. The 1/Dorset of the 5th Division, just out of the line and then at Strazeele, was therefore placed at his disposal, but by night had got no further than Neuve Eglise. The III. Corps having received somewhat depressing reports of the Cavalry Corps, General Pulteney took the precaution of making preliminary arrangements for the retirement of the 4th Division—which had now all but two battalions north of the Lys—to a rear position that had been partly prepared, known divisionally as Torres Vedras.

No such movement was found necessary. The attacks of the German *I. Cavalry Corps* and *40th Division* on the 4th Division north of the Lys, although spurred on by a message from the Kaiser, were everywhere repulsed, and the depression passed to the enemy's side. The *I. Cavalry Corps*, supported by some field artillery of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, had been ordered<sup>1</sup> to force its way round the north of Ploegsteert Wood and seize the heavy guns on Hill 63; but, says its chronicler, "on account of "the strongly prepared enemy positions, an advance here "was impossible without abundant artillery support". Attempts were made by the massed engineers of eight cavalry divisions to destroy the wire—there was little enough of it—in front of the 4th Division front, "but in "spite of the splendid behaviour and heavy losses of the "engineers, very little could be done in this direction, "owing to the bright moonlight".<sup>2</sup>

The *Guard Cavalry Division* received a special order to take Douve Farm, a moated farm south of the stream of that name and just north-west of St. Yves.<sup>3</sup> It was not occupied by the British, but visited from time to time by patrols of the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers. The Germans proceeded to smash the farm with "a mortar battery and two heavy howitzer batteries", but all attempts to reach it failed, for the two companies of the Inniskillings left behind, by a mistake, west of the farm, having plenty of ammunition, kept up bursts of rapid fire all day, and the enemy never apparently discovered their position. Of the *40th Infantry Division* and the *4th Cavalry Division* which attacked mainly the 11th Brigade, it is merely said<sup>4</sup> that they

<sup>1</sup> Poseck, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Poseck, p. 201. Full moon was on the 2nd November.

<sup>3</sup> Vogel, p. 210. "By order of His Majesty the Kaiser, Douve Farm is to be stormed to-day." It is 600 yards east of La Petite Douve Farm, so well known later on.

<sup>4</sup> Poseck, p. 201.

“ still lay heavily engaged opposite Ploegsteert Wood ”. Of this fighting, as so often occurs in the case of signal success in defence, there is again little record in the British war diaries. Any attempt to close by the Germans in this sector broke down completely under the artillery, rifle and machine-gun fire of the 4th Division.

THE RIGHT CENTRE : MOUSSY'S DETACHMENT. BULFIN'S FORCE AND THE 7TH DIVISION

Map 29.  
Sketch  
12.

The movements on the 1st November of Major-General Bulfin's six battalions, including Lord Cavan's group, and the 7th Division were dependent on General Moussy on their right. They were to go forward in succession as he advanced—tactics which had earlier been followed unsuccessfully near Zonnebeke. The French detachment north of the canal got no further than the line of the British trenches, some fifty to one hundred and fifty yards from the enemy. “ It could only make the preliminary moves of the offensive ordered ” and was immobilized by the German artillery,<sup>1</sup> like Woillemont's detachment next to it on the south side of the canal. In consequence, the British troops next to General Moussy did no more than open covering fire.

It was a fine, warm day, and as soon as the morning mist cleared, the German artillery recommenced its bombardment; but did little damage to the British line, mostly well sheltered by woods, except to the rather exposed trenches of the Irish Guards. Shortly after 11 A.M. a heavy attack, apparently by the *39th Division (XV. Corps)*,<sup>2</sup> developed against Bulfin's force and the right of the 20th Brigade. Thereupon General Bulfin sent up his only reserve at hand, the 26th Field Company R.E., and called for assistance on Lord Cavan, who ordered forward again the 2/Grenadier Guards which, on relief by General Moussy, had been sent back a few miles to rest. The four sections of the Field Company, only just over one hundred strong, were at once led up by Major H. L. Pritchard and distributed to fill gaps and thicken the firing line.<sup>3</sup>

On hearing of the attack and its first results, Sir D.

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 63. The *4th Bavarian Division* was its opponent. “ Ypres ”, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> “ Ypres ”, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> At 5 P.M. the 26th Field Company R.E. was withdrawn from the firing line and spent the night constructing splinter-proof dug-outs for the infantry supports. It had lost nearly half its strength.



Haig despatched half of his reserve, the 6th Cavalry 1 Nov. Brigade, to General Bulfin's assistance, and drew into corps reserve, from the 2nd Division, the 2/Worcestershire. Towards noon, to the great loss of the B.E.F., that determined fighter, General Bulfin, was disabled by wounds; Major-General Capper (7th Division), who was on the spot, directed Br.-General Lord Cavan to take command in his place.

The enemy's attack was now gradually extended northwards until the whole of Cavan's force, the 20th Brigade and the right of the 21st, were heavily engaged. About 1 P.M. a very determined general effort to advance was made by the enemy. It was successfully met by the 7th Division, but fell severely on the Irish Guards, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. The companies of the first named battalion were, one by one, shelled out of their trenches and, after having both machine guns hit, retired to the eastern edge of the wood north of Klein Zillebeke. Colonel Davies of the Oxfordshire at once formed a defensive flank towards the ground they had abandoned. But now, about 1.30 P.M., the flank company of the Northamptonshire was also forced back by heavy shelling and, exposed on both flanks, the Oxfordshire were ordered back to the line of their reserve company, where the whole line rallied. The 2/Grenadiers on reaching the field again filled the gap on the Oxfordshire right. Later the 1st Royal Dragoons (6th Cavalry Brigade) and the leading squadron, one of the 2nd Life Guards, of the 7th Cavalry Brigade, were also employed to strengthen the line. General Haig had sent this latter brigade to Lord Cavan at 2 P.M. on news of the renewed attack and, having already parted with the 2/Worcestershire to the 7th Division, he had expended his last reserve. But further help to the right was unnecessary; the men of the 3rd Cavalry Division, though few in numbers, brought just the amount of reinforcement sufficient to stop the enemy. At dusk the line of Cavan's force was the same as in the morning except that it was shortened by blunting the salient at the corner of Shrewsbury Forest, which had proved a weak spot. The position of the 7th Division turned out to be absolutely intact, although at first some doubt existed as to its exact location in the thick woods.

At 7 P.M. Lord Cavan drew the Gordons and Sussex—who had been used to cover the readjustment—out of the line, which was then held by the Irish Guards, 2/Grenadier Guards, 2/Oxfordshire Light Infantry and 1/Northampton-



shire. Then came, as before, the 20th<sup>1</sup> and 21st Brigades, with the 22nd in reserve. The troops of General Capper and Lord Cavan were fatigued and worn out to the last degree. Though they seldom had a field of fire of more than thirty to a hundred yards, and no more obstacle in front of them than a wire fastened from tree to tree, and had been pounded by a numerous heavy artillery, they had held their ground with feeble effectives against the whole *39th Division* and brigades of the *4th Bavarian* and *30th Divisions* on either flank of it.

#### THE LEFT CENTRE : THE 1ST DIVISION

On the left of the 7th, opposite Gheluvelt, the 1st Division had after a quiet night an anxious though uneventful day. From 8 A.M. onwards the enemy bombarded its new line with heavy shell, most of which fortunately fell behind it. This was some compensation to the men for the poor shelter of shallow trenches hastily dug in very light soil during the night. Large numbers of Germans, probably the right brigade of the *30th Division, XV. Corps*, were observed collecting in front of the right, but they did not come on. Opposite the left, only a few Germans (*XXVII. Corps*) were seen. Fire kept the enemy at a respectful distance.<sup>2</sup>

Owing to the heavy casualties, the British line was all too thin. The 1st Division was 16 short of its 48 machine guns; two battalions were away with General Bulfin; and the only troops in reserve were the 1/Coldstream, made up again by drafts to about 200 strong, 80 Black Watch and the 52 survivors of the 1/Queen's. At first General Haig could do little to remedy this dangerous situation; but later in the day he sent to Major-General Landon three companies of the 1/Royal Berkshire from the reserve of the 2nd Division, and the 1/K.R.R.C. (6th Brigade) from the extreme left of the

<sup>1</sup> The four battalions of the 20th were reported as under :—

1/Grenadier Guards under Capt. G. E. C. Rasch, 5 officers, 200 men.

2/Scots Guards under Capt. G. C. B. Paynter, 5 officers, 250 men.

2/Border Regt. under Major G. E. Warren, 5 officers, 270 men.

2/Gordon Highlanders under Lt. J. M. Hamilton, 5 officers, 200 men.

<sup>2</sup> The accounts given in the German official account ("Ypres", pp. 83-4) of the divisions of the *XXVII. Corps* "extending their successes of the previous day" and taking Poezelhoek Chateau after a heavy fight (it had been evacuated the previous night), and of the divisions of the *XV. Corps* advancing slowly all day, fighting hard, have no counterpart in the British records.

British line, where it had been relieved during the previous 1 Nov. night by the French. It was not until 7.55 P.M. that the hard-trying battalions of the 3rd and 2nd Brigades—the South Wales Borderers, 320 strong, the Gloucestershire, 400, the Welch, 220, the 2/K.R.R.C., 330, and the Loyal North Lancashire, 100,—were replaced in the line by these two units. The battalions of the 3rd Brigade went into corps reserve at Hooge, the two battalions of the 2nd to divisional reserve. For the 1st (Guards) Brigade there was no relief.

Reinforcements, consisting of 13 officers and 540 other ranks, which had arrived during the day, were kept together as a mobile corps reserve at Hooge.

#### THE LEFT. THE 2ND DIVISION AND BERNARD'S DETACHMENT

The six battalions holding the 2nd Division<sup>1</sup> front had a quiet day except for bombardment and one attack at 4 P.M. This was made on the 2/South Staffordshire on the extreme left of the line, and was repulsed after an hour's struggle.

For the attack from the left of the British, planned between General Bernard and the 2nd Division at midnight, the French troops moved up through the woods at 6.30 A.M. with guides furnished by the 2nd Division. The infantry began to advance at 10.30 A.M., supported by British covering fire; but here also the French did not get further than the front trench line. Shortly after noon, as no progress had been made, it was decided to wait until darkness before making further effort. The French, however, took over the front of another battalion—the Highland Light Infantry—allowing it to be withdrawn, a matter of some importance as the reserve of the division was reduced to one company of the 1/Royal Berkshire.

#### GENERAL SITUATION ON THE EVENING OF THE 1ST NOVEMBER

North of Ypres, beyond General Dubois' IX. Corps, the two French counter-attacks had made no progress: General de Mitry, indeed, was violently attacked, and his cavalry and Territorial divisions had all they could do to

<sup>1</sup> Of the other six, three were with Lord Cavan on the right, one with the 7th Division, and two with the 1st Division.

remain in occupation of Bixschoote. General Humbert's offensive from the Dixmude area eastwards with the XXXII. Corps was held up at once, and a wireless message from Crown Prince Rupprecht to the German *Fourth Army* calling for an attack on Dixmude was intercepted. On the Belgian front there was calm.

The day was favourable for flying and a number of reconnaissances were made. They established that there was no trace of movement behind the enemy's front, except that at 9 A.M. four columns of infantry, the equivalent of two brigades,<sup>1</sup> were seen marching southward from Ostend on Thourout. The only German reserves seemed to be cavalry in bivouac near Wervicq and north-eastwards. Sounds heard near Armentières during the night of the 31st October/1st November appeared to indicate some movement of troops northward. The *3rd Prussian Division* arrived during the day from the south near Roye and assembled in the area Wambeke—Garde Dieu, 3,000 yards east of Wytschaete, behind the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*.<sup>2</sup>

During the day the presence of the *XV. Corps* and *26th Division* was definitely established by identifications; but prisoners of only one regiment of the *II. Bavarian Corps* were captured. Thus it remained uncertain how much of this formation was in the north, and doubts as to all its units being there were aroused by a French Intelligence Bureau report that two regiments of one of its divisions were at Curlu on the Somme on the 29th October.

The British Commander-in-Chief in telegraphing the events of the 1st November to the War Office, early on the 2nd, reported that though Messines had been evacuated he was, on the whole, much less anxious, as the enemy appeared to be less active along the whole of his front. Other messages he sent confirmed the lack of gun ammunition:—there was only an approximate average of 180 rounds per field howitzer and 320 per 18-pdr. field gun, and no 100-lb. lyddite for the 6-inch howitzers. He drew attention to the heavy losses in officers, the 1/Royal West Kent having only four—all subalterns—left, and a Gurkha battalion only 3 out of 13 British officers; whilst the

<sup>1</sup> Probably part of the *Marine Division*.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 86. The M.S. Intelligence "Daily Summary of Enemy Movements" has, under 1st November, an entry that there were 8 to 10 bivouacs near Garde Dieu and a few others round Gapaard of the *3rd Prussian Division*. The source of the information is not given.



1/Coldstream, even after the arrival of reinforcements, 1 Nov. only had two besides the quartermaster.

From all sources came reports of the extreme fatigue of the troops, who had no rest either day or night. But as ever there was the other side of the picture; for the German prisoners were equally tired out and some stated that they had been without food for three days.

Towards evening Sir J. French came up to see Generals Foch and d'Urbal at the latter's headquarters at Vlamerhinghe. It was determined to continue the operations on the same lines as before. General d'Urbal, in addition to the forces previously mentioned, now had a reserve of five battalions, the leading portion of the 39th Division. General Conneau's cavalry corps had been ordered up from Merville, but its leading divisions had only reached Bailleul.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTE

## THE GERMAN OPERATIONS ON THE 1ST NOVEMBER

The enemy official account of the operations on the 1st November<sup>2</sup> is very meagre, but it claims some success. The Bavarian account, on the other hand, admits that "the day was not fortunate for the German arms".<sup>3</sup> It is quite impossible to reconcile these accounts with the British except that there is complete agreement that the Germans attacked all along the line from the Lys nearly to Dixmude. The various points of difference are therefore recapitulated here. It is claimed that the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* extended its successes and took Poezelhoek Chateau—which had been evacuated by the 1st Brigade on the previous night—after a heavy fight.

The *XV. Corps*, attacking between the Menin road and Klein Zillebeke, is said to have "advanced but slowly, fighting all day", whilst the British account of it is that the position of the 7th Division remained unchanged and Cavan's force withdrew only from a small salient.

The *II. Bavarian Corps*, on both sides of the Comines Canal, "drove the enemy back as far as the sharp bend in it", but this is where the Allied line was in the morning and remained all day. Further an entirely imaginary fight with Indian troops—who were not engaged—is described. The Bavarian account admits heavy losses and an unsuccessful night attack by part of the *3rd Bavarian Division*.

It is admitted that the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, after entering Wytschaete, was turned out; but the counter-attack of the head of the French 32nd Division and the 12th Lancers is attributed to "two fresh divisions".

It has been noted that the occupation of Messines, after it had been evacuated at 8 A.M., is described as accomplished by "fierce street fighting lasting throughout the day".

At night General von Fabeck decided to bring up the *3rd Division* to recover Wytschaete and carry on the attack through the village towards Kemmel.

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> "Bavaria", p. 143.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT

2ND NOVEMBER 1914

(Map 30; Sketch 12)

#### THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S *ARMY GROUP* (*continued*)

##### LOSS OF WYTSCHAETE

THE 2nd November, which was fine and sunny, with only very little mist after 8 A.M., proved a day of hard fighting. The Germans brought up a fresh division and another infantry brigade, and renewed their attack all along the front, with a bombardment heavier than before. The Allies also received reinforcements, the greater part of the French 39th Division (General Dantant), and the 1st Cavalry Division (General Mazel) coming on to the field. Although Wytschaete was lost by the French and another British battalion, the 1/K.R.R.C., was practically annihilated, there was little change in the general situation. The counter-attacks ordered by General Foch led to no progress, but in their general results they neutralized the German efforts.

##### THE RIGHT. THE 4TH DIVISION, CAVALRY CORPS, CONNEAU'S CAVALRY CORPS, THE FRENCH 39TH AND 32ND DIVISIONS AND OLLERIS' DETACHMENT: LOSS OF WYTSCHAETE

Map 30. Sketch 12. Shortly after 8 A.M. the leading troops of Mazel's cavalry division of Conneau's corps appeared from Kemmel, and took over at Spanbroekmolen from the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, which was supporting the right of the French

32nd Division. Thus the whole of the 2nd Cavalry Division 2 Nov. had been relieved and was now in reserve.

The French, including Moussy's detachment north of the Comines Canal, now held some five miles of front between the two wings of the British forces engaged in the Battles of Ypres. Counting from right to left, from Frélinghien on the Lys—the southern limit of Fabeck's attack—the first five miles were occupied by the 4th Division (III. Corps) and the 1st Cavalry Division<sup>1</sup> with the 2nd Cavalry Division in reserve; then came the five miles of the sector occupied by the French, in which they had their 1st Cavalry Division, 39th Division (just arriving), 32nd Division and 9th Cavalry Division, Olleris' detachment,<sup>2</sup> and Moussy's detachment.<sup>3</sup> The next six and a half miles were occupied by the three divisions of the British I. Corps, with the 3rd Cavalry Division in reserve; and, curving round from near Zonnebeke to Langemark, were five and a half miles of front covered by the French IX. Corps and 31st Division, with two cavalry divisions in reserve.<sup>4</sup> The British front was a trifle longer than the French and rather more thinly held, for on the former were four divisions, three cavalry divisions and some seven odd battalions, as against d'Urbal's five divisions, six cavalry divisions and about six odd battalions.

The instructions given by General d'Urbal to the French troops in the right sector were: for General Conneau to seize the ground between the Douve and Messines; the 39th Division<sup>5</sup> to recapture Messines; and the 32nd Division from Wytschaete with the detachments of

<sup>1</sup> At dawn on the 2nd November the 5th Divisional artillery (less the howitzer brigade left with the Meerut Division) under Br.-General J. E. W. Headlam, joined the 1st Cavalry Division. The only rest from fighting it had had since it came out of the line near La Bassée on the 30th October was taken up by a march back to Caestre and then up to the front again via Bailleul. The XV. and XXVIII. Brigades were brought into action on either side of Wulverghem to stop any advance from Messines. The 108th Heavy Battery took position near Lindenhoek in front of Kimmel Hill.

<sup>2</sup> Formed by adding two battalions from the 43rd Division to Woillemont's original four battalions and two groups of artillery. Dubois, ii. p. 63. General Olleris was commander of a brigade of the 43rd Division.

<sup>3</sup> Five battalions and one group of artillery.

<sup>4</sup> 6th and 7th Cavalry Divisions of Hély D'Oissel's detachment. With Conneau were the 1st, 3rd and 10th, the two latter not yet arrived on the field; with de Mitry, the 4th and 5th; and with the 32nd Division, the 9th.

<sup>5</sup> This division detrained at Bailleul and marched up via Elverdinghe and Boesinghe, and then was diverted to the right. Palat, viii. p. 254, Note 2.

Olleris and Moussy, to co-operate by pushing forward on their front, the general objective being the line of the Comines Canal from Houthem to the chateau east of Hollebeke.<sup>1</sup> How many units of these formations went into action has not yet been made known, but of Conneau's three cavalry divisions only one, Mazel's, was engaged.

It so happened that the enemy made his principal effort and put in his reinforcements against the Wytschaete sector, the very front to which General d'Urbal was directing his fresh troops. The *11th Landwehr Brigade* was sent to Messines to reinforce the left of the *26th Division*; and the *3rd Prussian Division* was interpolated in the line between the *26th Division* and the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, which was attacking Wytschaete.<sup>2</sup> Thus against the right sector of the French forces, consisting of two divisions and a half with two (the 1st and 9th) cavalry divisions, there were five and a half German divisions<sup>3</sup>—nearly double the French strength. The Germans moved first, their infantry advancing at 8.30 A.M., whilst the orders of the French fixed their starting time an hour and a half later.<sup>4</sup> The general result was that not only did the Allies make no progress and recover no ground, but in places, owing to heavy fire, they were forced back. General Mazel did not attack until the afternoon and was not successful; the efforts of the head of the French 39th Division were neutralized by meeting the right brigade of the *26th Division* and the left brigade of the *3rd Division*.<sup>5</sup> The 32nd Division was attacked by the *6th Bavarian*

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", pp. 86 and 89.

<sup>3</sup> From south to north:—*11th Landwehr Brigade, 26th, 3rd, 6th Bavarian Reserve, 3rd Bavarian and 4th Bavarian Divisions.*

<sup>4</sup> A captured copy of the orders of the *3rd Bavarian Division* for the operations of the 2nd Nov. gave the distribution of the three Bavarian divisions and *3rd Division* (from north to south) as follows:—

*4th Bavarian Division* to attack north of the Comines Canal.

*3rd Bavarian Division* front S.W. corner of park west of Hollebeke—Voormezele—Vierstraat cross roads.

*6th Bavarian Reserve Division* to act on left of *3rd Bavarian Division* and capture Wytschaete.

*3rd Division* to follow the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* and as soon as the latter had captured Wytschaete to pass through it and take Kemmel.

It is stated, however, in "Bavarian Infantry Regiment No. 22", p. 21, that this unit of the *3rd Bavarian Division* was attached to the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division* and took part in the attack on Wytschaete alongside the *8th Reserve Infantry Regiment*.

<sup>5</sup> "The southern wing of the *3rd Division* remained always in the "same spot" and an attempt of the right of the *26th* to advance was stopped by flanking fire. "Regiment No. 122", p. 43.



*Reserve Division*, supported by parts of the *3rd* and *3rd* 2 Nov. *Bavarian Divisions* on its flanks, and, after heavy fighting, was driven out of Wyttschaete village, though it managed to hold on to the park. Olleris' detachment was forced back southwards by the right wing of the *3rd Bavarian Division*, leaving a gap near the canal, where the situation was critical: at one time there were reports that the Germans had reached St. Eloi and were menacing the Ypres—Wyttschaete road behind the 32nd Division. The ground near the canal was recovered about 5 P.M. by General Dubois employing a cavalry regiment and two battalions from his reserve. Moussy's detachment, according to French accounts,<sup>1</sup> was unable to develop its attack; but the Germans admit that the *II. Bavarian Corps*, astride the canal, was held up by counter-attacks and only claim a slight advance against General Moussy.<sup>2</sup>

On the immediate right of Mazel's cavalry division the 1st Cavalry Division (Major-General de Lisle) had the 1st Cavalry Brigade in the line. It underwent a terrific bombardment, a supporting section of the 52nd Battery (XV. Brigade) being knocked out, and about 11 A.M. its left and the French cavalry on that flank fell back a short distance. The situation was soon restored by sending up the 12th Lancers from divisional reserve, and the line was not only held, but the Germans were mastered. When at 2.20 P.M. General Mazel felt able to move against Messines, General de Lisle sent the 2nd Cavalry Brigade forward along the Douve, and all guns, including those of the 5th Division, were used to support the French. The attack never had any prospect of success, and was stopped after the French cavalry had incurred heavy losses. At night the 2nd Cavalry Brigade and Oxfordshire Hussars relieved the 1st in the line.

Further to the south, after very heavy bombardment in which trench mortars were used, the German *I. Cavalry Corps*, with two battalions of the *134th Infantry Regiment*<sup>3</sup> attacked the 11th Brigade (4th Division). The Germans pressed forward with vigour, particularly in the vicinity of St. Yves, but were everywhere repulsed with heavy loss.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 67. Palat, viii. pp. 237-9.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> "Regiment No. 134", p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 90, claims that Petite Douve farm was stormed by "part of the Army Cavalry", but the divisional account, Vogel, p. 212, states that it was Douve farm (not Petite Douve), and mentions the moat round it, which settles the point. It had been evacuated by the British. See p. 355.

They then resumed the bombardment in preparation for another advance, and so serious did this become that General Hunter-Weston doubted whether the line along Ploegsteert Wood—occupied by the 1/Hampshire, 1/Somerset Light Infantry and 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers—could be held much longer. In view of a further enemy attack, the 1/Dorsetshire (5th Division) at Neuve Eglise, as well as the 3/Worcestershire (3rd Division), a weak and rather shattered unit, were placed at the disposal of the 4th Division. Major-General H. F. M. Wilson used the latter battalion, with the 2/Lancashire Fusiliers, to relieve the Hampshire and Somerset L.I., and brought up the Dorsets behind the 11th Brigade. Notwithstanding the well-founded alarm, night found the line of the 4th Division in exactly the same position as in the morning.

THE CENTRE. CAVAN'S FORCE, 7TH DIVISION  
AND 1ST DIVISION

DISASTER TO THE 1/K.R.R.C. AND FURTHER  
WITHDRAWAL NEAR GHELUVELT

The French were also to take the offensive in the centre of the British front. As we have seen, Moussy's detachment on the right of Lord Cavan was unable to move. Further to the north, Bernard's detachment of the IX. Corps—increased from eight battalions to ten, with four groups of artillery, and placed under General Vidal—was to attack south-eastwards towards Beelaere, as on the previous day. But this village was strongly occupied, so on Sir D. Haig's suggestion, the objective was changed. Pursuing the idea of a north to south counter-attack, Vidal arranged to pass through the left of the 1st Division between the Menin road and Polygon Wood, and to attack south-eastwards against the curve in the German line near Gheluvelt. This was practically to follow the route of the Worcestershire on the 31st October. In co-operation with this movement of General Vidal the British 1st Division was to attack eastwards, so that the enemy would be caught between two fires.

The infantry advance should have taken place at 10 A.M.,<sup>1</sup> and the artillery preparation began in good time; but, owing to various causes—the confusion due to the mixture of French and British troops, and the former being

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 66, but 9 A.M. according to British records.

new to the ground—it was not until after 12 noon that 2 Nov. Vidal's battalions began to approach the British line. But here, as near Wytschaete, the enemy took the initiative.

To avoid interference with Vidal's advance, the artillery of the 1st Division had received instructions not to fire from 10.30 A.M. onwards on the ground near the Menin road, which could not be overlooked by ground observers. This, unfortunately, gave the enemy a great opportunity. From 8.30 A.M. onwards his *30th Division*, with *XXVII. Reserve Corps* north of it,<sup>1</sup> had shown a disposition to push forward on either side of the Menin road, where stood D Company of the 1/Royal Berkshire, three companies of the 1/K.R.R.C., and the 1/Coldstream, the last being under the establishment of a company in men and having only two officers. One company of the K.R.R.C. and two of the Berkshire were in support. These troops, it will be recalled, had only taken over from the 3rd Brigade after dark, less than twelve hours earlier, and had found but shallow disconnected lengths of trench, barely marking a front, without any wire or, of course, any dug-outs. Across the road where the two hundred Coldstream stood, was a barricade. Behind this was a group of houses and a farm building which had not been prepared for defence; for, though the men in this sector worked hard during the night, they were too tired to effect much. When daylight came and they were thoroughly worn out, it was found that the field of fire, owing to a ridge on one side and a falling slope on the other, was limited to from fifty to one hundred and fifty yards. This would have been sufficient if there had been a good obstacle in front of the trenches, and if the supporting artillery had had direct observation on the narrow field of fire. It was inadequate in the circumstances, particularly as hedges obstructed view along the line and interfered with mutual support. To make matters worse, less than one hundred yards in front of the British line, bordering on the road, was a small house, to burn which all endeavours had been in vain.

The barricade on the road was early blown away and one machine gun of the K.R.R.C., which covered it, put out of action. Though held off elsewhere, the Germans managed to get up a machine gun into the small house about 9.30 A.M. Another party with another machine gun worked its way through a gap of over sixty yards

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 86-7.



between the Berkshire company and the K.R.R.C. north of it, and now opened fire at a hundred yards' range into the backs of the Rifles. This battalion had definite orders not to retire and, with the Berkshire and the Coldstream, still kept off all attackers. Invaluable aid was rendered by the artillery, particularly by two guns of the 116th Battery a couple of hundred yards behind the line.

About 11 A.M., soon after the British batteries had according to orders ceased to fire on the area near the Menin road, Germans of the *30th Division*, under the covering fire of the machine gun in the small house, came on boldly down the road in parties of thirty and forty, followed on either side of it by others crawling in twos and threes. Getting up close to the British trenches, they overpowered the Coldstream, taking prisoner Captain E. G. Christie-Miller, who was in command, and capturing or killing nearly one-half of their scanty number. They then turned against the three companies of the K.R.R.C., already attacked in front, machine-gunned from the rear and bombed by parties working up the trench from their right. Then came a final rush. There was a *melée* between the Germans and the two left companies, but it lasted only a few minutes. The right company held out a little longer, but in the end 9 officers and 437 men of the battalion were killed or captured. The two guns of the 116th Battery had been taken a few minutes earlier by Germans who had got through the line. For a moment it seemed that the gap would be extended; but, on the right, the 21st Brigade, D Company, and the two supporting companies of the Royal Berkshire under Major H. M. Finch, stood fast; and on the left the 1/Scots Guards, aided by a well planned counter-attack of three companies of the 1/Black Watch, only 120 strong, more than held its own. Company by company the Highlanders pushed up to the right of the Scots Guards, and though their numbers were reduced to 75, they stopped the German forward movement on the Menin road. The British troops near the gap were, however, outflanked by the Germans established in it, and their position was perilous.

When messages reporting the break—for nothing could be seen from brigade or divisional headquarters in this close country—reached the 1st Division, General Landon at 11.35 A.M. ordered his only available reserve, the 2/K.R.R.C. (330 strong), to fill the gap left by the capture of its first battalion; but he recalled it when the leading French

troops of Vidal's force appeared soon afterwards. When 2 Nov. General Capper (7th Division) heard that the 1st Division was taking measures to stop the enemy, he did not send assistance to the 21st Brigade, for such slender help as he could provide was urgently required on his right flank. General Haig, on being informed, warned the 3rd Cavalry Division to be prepared to support the 7th Division.

Vidal's force which had appeared so opportunely was at once observed by the enemy and stopped by heavy shrapnel fire directly it left the cover of Polygon Wood. At 1.15 P.M., therefore, General Landon, to help it, ordered the 3rd Brigade with its two attached battalions of the 2nd, only some 1,500 strong in all,<sup>1</sup> to leave its trenches and counter-attack towards Gheluvelt, south of the Menin road. A French battalion joined in on the left and the 4th Battalion of Zouaves from Hooze on the right. The rest of Vidal's force now attacked southwards from Polygon Wood so as to take in flank the advancing Germans who, passing through the gap, had reached the first houses of Veldhoek and got into the Herenthage Woods.<sup>2</sup> Well supported by French and British field artillery, the combined counter-attack was entirely successful; by 3.30 P.M. the enemy was cleared out of the woods; and the line everywhere recovered, with the exception of some trenches in front of the Herenthage Woods, just south of the road.<sup>3</sup> The two companies of the 1/R. Berkshire under Major Finch, made an advance to regain these, and, almost simultaneously, General FitzClarence—by now usually spoken of as "G.O.C. Menin Road"—collected a number of men of various units, scattered by the German advance, for the same purpose. But owing to the lack of officers, the utter fatigue of the men, who could hardly raise a cheer, and the absence of the impulse of fresh troops from behind, the trenches were not recovered. At night, therefore, the Berkshire were recalled into support and the line near the Menin road was again withdrawn a little, so that it ran along the edge of the north-east corner of Herenthage Wood instead of in front of it. Thence it continued to the

<sup>1</sup> Queen's, 50; South Wales Borderers, 320; Gloucestershire, 400; Welch, 220; 2/K.R.R.C., 330; Loyal North Lancashire, 180; stragglers, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> The German account states, correctly, that "the 30th Division entered Veldhoek and established itself firmly in the north-eastern corner of Herenthage Wood", but omits the subsequent expulsion. "Ypres", p. 86.

6-kilometre stone on the Menin road; turned forward slightly at right angles to the road, behind, instead of in front of, the scattered cottages of Veldhoek; and ran on to the south-west corner of Polygon Wood as before.

Whilst the left flank of the 7th Division was in peril from the German attack launched by the *30th Division* from Gheluvelt and thus fortunately countered, its right was equally threatened by the other wing of the *XV. Corps*. The *39th Division* with a *Jäger* brigade, advanced against the junction of Lord Cavan's force<sup>1</sup> and the 20th Brigade, where stood the Northamptonshire and the Border Regiment. About 8.30 A.M., the time of the first attack elsewhere, enemy infantry were seen massing opposite the sector; but, discouraged by fire, they did not come on, and the heavy bombardment was renewed. Towards 10.30 A.M. the left company of the Northamptonshire was shelled out of its trenches. Lord Cavan then withdrew the battalion to the shelter of the woods behind and brought up a company of the 2/R. Sussex to support it. General Capper sent up the 2/Worcestershire (5th Brigade), lent to him as divisional reserve, behind his right: and, as a last resort, moved forward his divisional mounted troops, the Northumberland Hussars and his cyclist company, to the threatened junction.

By about 1 P.M. the Germans had worked forward close to the British line, and tried to push through into the gap apparently left by the Northamptonshire. They were stopped by the fire of the Border Regiment and Northamptonshire—which was withheld until the enemy was quite close—and then driven off by a counter-attack of the company of the Royal Sussex and half the 2/Worcestershire. During this fighting, General Ruggles-Brise, commanding the 20th Brigade, was severely wounded, and, all senior field officers having also been killed or wounded, the brigade major, Major A. B. E. Cator, took command.

At 4 P.M., after a further burst of heavy shelling, another enemy infantry attack was made at the same place, but it died away after an effort lasting only fifteen minutes. The Germans seemed so discouraged and the situation so far improved in consequence of the good shooting and splendid fire discipline of the troops that General Capper felt able to withdraw the 2/Worcestershire into reserve again, and to send to his left the 7th Cavalry

<sup>1</sup> Now five battalions, as the 2/Gordon Highlanders had been sent back to the 20th Brigade.



Brigade which had been lent to him by General Haig. His appreciation proved correct; for though there was much shouting of "Vorwärts" and "Deutschland über alles", and sounding of horns, the only further enemy infantry attack, made at 6.15 P.M., collapsed in ten minutes. The German account says of this part of the field that the *39th Division* "was held up by the difficult wooded country".<sup>1</sup>

In the right centre, therefore, the line was intact; but on the evening of the 2nd November, instead of the three infantry brigades of the 7th Division each mustering 124 officers and 4,100 other ranks, they numbered, respectively, 18 officers and 900 men, 13 officers and 910 men, and 13 officers and 586 men—a fifth of their original strength. It may be added that the infantry brigades of the 2nd Division—half of whose battalions were detached to make up the other divisions—were reported to be, respectively, 3,140, 2,658 and 2,838 strong, about two-thirds of their proper numbers; and those of the 1st Division, recorded next day, were:—1st (Guards) Brigade: 22 officers and 1,206 other ranks; 2nd Brigade: 43 and 1,315; and the 3rd: 27 and 970; total for the division 3,583, which was less than one-third of the establishment. Though the divisions of the newly-formed German Reserve Corps had suffered equal or greater losses, those of the *XV.* and *II. Bavarian Corps*, now attacking, were fresh.

#### THE LEFT. THE 2ND DIVISION AND FRENCH IX. CORPS

The forces on the left, both the 2nd Division and Dubois' 17th, 18th and 31st Divisions, had been so much reduced by sending detachments to other parts of the field that no offensive action was possible. General Monro had five battalions in line, with a French battalion interpolated, and the 2/Highland Light Infantry and a company of the 2/Berkshire in reserve. The French 18th Division also had but six battalions, and the 17th and 31st only five battalions each, with Laperrine's dragoon brigade next to the British, and Maison-Rouge's cuirassier brigade in corps reserve. The 2nd Division could only participate in the battle by fire, which, by order, was to increase in volume on the approach of 10 A.M., the hour for General Vidal's offensive against Gheluvelt.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 366.

The *XXIII.* and *XXVI.* and portions of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*<sup>1</sup> opposite the forces of General Monro and Dubois were not very active, but towards 12.45 P.M. a serious attack was made on the French right in which the dragoon brigade suffered heavy casualties. The situation was immediately restored by reinforcements and by a counter-attack of the 2/South Staffordshire led by Captain A. F. G. Kilby,<sup>2</sup> which cleared the Germans out of the woods into which they had penetrated. The 2/Connaught Rangers, next to the Staffordshire, were subsequently attacked, and called for assistance; but the alarm was unnecessary and they were able to deal with the enemy without reinforcement; and the day closed for the 2nd Division without further incident.

On the extreme left of the Allies, the progress of the French counter-attacks of Generals Humbert and de Mitry was "insignificant", and the only change of importance was that the French 42nd Division, leaving a small detachment at Nieuport, moved southwards to a central position behind Dixmude.

#### GENERAL SITUATION ON THE EVENING OF THE 2ND NOVEMBER

No intelligence of strategic value came to hand during the day except that men of the German *Marine Corps* had been captured by the French opposite Bixsechoote. Though the Flying Corps reported much information as to the position of batteries and trenches, and co-operated to a small extent with the artillery, the presence of the German *3rd Division* was not detected. It was still uncertain, too, whether both divisions of the *II. Bavarian Corps* were in the north, and it was thought possible that the corps was made up of one of its original divisions and the *6th Reserve Division*, just as the *XIII. Corps* had been reorganized to consist of one regular and one reserve division. There were rumours, now known to be founded on fact,<sup>3</sup> that the German High Command was contemplating the withdrawal of divisions from Flanders, in order to restore the situation brought about by Hindenburg's defeat before

<sup>1</sup> The front of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps* extended from near the Menin road to the Zonnebeke-Ypres railway.

<sup>2</sup> Killed in the Battle of Loos, 25th September, 1915, and awarded a posthumous V.C.

<sup>3</sup> "Der grosse Krieg", by General Schwarte, i. p. 474.

Warsaw and the disastrous retreat of the Austrian and 2 Nov. German Armies.<sup>1</sup>

Sir John French reported to the War Office that the situation was difficult, but he was hopeful of the issue. He suggested that some or all of the 8th Division, then being formed in the United Kingdom, from units brought from overseas,<sup>2</sup> should be sent to him; and when Lord Kitchener offered him a Yeomanry division, he accepted it gladly.<sup>3</sup> He emphasized that his most urgent need was a few more regular battalions, infantry rather than artillery or mounted troops. Drafts to replace casualties were not coming along as fast as they were required, and officers gazetted since the 4th August were beginning to appear, no provision having been made for such heavy losses. As so often in its history, the British Army had been launched into a great enterprise with wholly insufficient means.

Two Orders of the Day encouraging the troops to further resistance and promising them strong support in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, were issued from G.H.Q. No operation orders were sent out, as General Foch's intentions were not known; but the I. Corps was instructed that General Moussy's detachment, north of the canal and nominally under Sir D. Haig, should be handed back to General d'Urbal. At 6 P.M. this latter commander ordered that the counter-attacks arranged for the 2nd November should be continued "under the same conditions" and placed in reserve the 43rd Division (General Lanquetot) which was just arriving at Elverdinghe.

General Haig, in a message issued at 8.30 P.M.,<sup>4</sup> directed that the line should be maintained at all costs; that every effort should be made to withdraw troops so as to form local reserves for counter-attacks; and that the 3rd Cavalry Division, the London Scottish and two battalions to be furnished by the 2nd Division, would form his own reserve at Hooze. The 4th Regiment of Zouaves (4th and 11th Battalions), under Colonel Eychenè, had been placed at his disposal by General d'Urbal. They arrived at Hooze during the morning and, as we have seen, the 4th Battalion was engaged at Herenthage, and remained there all night. The 11th continued in reserve.

<sup>1</sup> Falkenhayn, p. 33, mentions also that it was debated whether the Ypres offensive should not be stopped and some other front in France attacked.

<sup>2</sup> Three battalions each from India, Egypt and Malta; one each from South Africa, Aden and Bermuda.

<sup>3</sup> The division was not sent.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 42.



General Allenby ordered the 1st Cavalry Division to maintain its position, and kept the 2nd in reserve in rest billets.

Both I. Corps advanced headquarters at the White Chateau near Hellfire Corner, and its main headquarters in Ypres were shelled during the day. Sir D. Haig therefore moved them back, one to a house at the junction of the Zonnebeke and Gheluvelt roads, just east of Ypres, and the other to Poperinghe.

#### NOTE

##### THE GERMAN OPERATIONS ON THE 2ND NOVEMBER <sup>1</sup>

Map 30. The battle was continued on the 2nd "along the whole front of Fabeck's *Army Group*". It is represented that the right of the *XV. Corps (30th Division)* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, on either side of the Menin road, "continued the advance", the former entering Veldhoek and the latter "pressing forward some hundreds of yards", a progress which certainly did not apply to the front line.

It is admitted that the left wing of the *XV. Corps (39th Division)* was held up—by the left of Cavan's detachment and the right of the 7th Division—whilst the *II. Bavarian Corps* only made a slight advance on its right.

South of Messines "no progress of importance was made, except "the capture of Douve Farm [not occupied by the British] owing "to effective shell fire".

The German official bulletin informed the world that "the attacks on Ypres are progressing. Over 2,300 men, mostly British, "were taken prisoner and several machine guns captured."

It was determined to continue the battle, combining the *3rd* and *26th Divisions* into a corps under the Duke of Urach to attack "the high ground east of Kemmel".

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 86-90.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES. BATTLE OF GHELUVELT

3RD, 4TH AND 5TH NOVEMBER 1914<sup>1</sup>

(Maps 1, 31, 32, 33; Sketches 12, 13)

#### THE GRADUAL DYING DOWN OF THE FRENCH AND GERMAN OFFENSIVES

##### THE ATTACK OF FABECK'S *ARMY GROUP* (concluded)

DURING the next three days, the 3rd, 4th and 5th November, there was little change in the situation at the front. The activity of the German heavy artillery continued—increased, indeed, in volume, owing to more guns being brought up and additional ammunition placed at the disposal of General von Fabeck. Armentières and Ypres were severely shelled. Yet, although the enemy had everywhere a substantial numerical superiority and claims to have gained ground daily,<sup>2</sup> his infantry achieved no success: there were no crises and calm reigned at the Allied headquarters. So great was the contrast in this respect to the heavy offensives of the previous days, that, as there were persistent reports of the departure of the Kaiser and the withdrawal of troops for service on the Russian frontier—where Hindenburg had suffered severe defeat and lost 40,000 men<sup>3</sup>—the Allied commanders were induced to

<sup>1</sup> According to "The Official Names of the Battles and Other Engagements fought by the Military Forces of the British Empire during the "Great War 1914-1919 and the Third Afghan War 1919", the Battle of Gheluvelt ends on 31st October, and the Battle of Messines on 2nd November, and no special battle name is allotted again until the 11th November. There was, however, no cessation of the German attacks (see "Ypres", p. 93), and they fell most heavily on the troops between the Lys and the Menin road. The sub-name of Gheluvelt is therefore retained for the 3rd to 5th November.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 93. The official communiqué says "slow but successful progress".

<sup>3</sup> Wrisberg, "Heer und Heimat", p. 21.

think that no further efforts would be made in Flanders. This appreciation was erroneous; at the very moment the German Supreme Command was bringing up more troops for the decisive blow.

### 3RD NOVEMBER

#### FRENCH OFFENSIVE CONTINUED WITHOUT SUCCESS

Map 31.  
Sketch  
12.

The 3rd November has been summed up by one French writer as a day of marking time; by another, as a day of attacks and counter-attacks without progress. The former phrase expresses the strategic, the latter, the tactical situation; and both remarks apply almost equally to the 4th and 5th November.

During a visit to I. Corps headquarters on the evening of 2nd November, General Vidal (commanding the French troops sent up that day to the junction of the British 1st and 2nd Divisions north of Gheluvelt) admitted that his battalions had not been able to advance beyond the British trenches. On learning this, General Haig suggested to him that he should relieve the 1st (Guards) Brigade and the part of the 2nd Division on his front, and so save the sector from being double-manned as it appeared to be. To this course General Vidal agreed; but owing to interference by small enemy attacks, the execution of the relief was very slow and only two French companies actually took over from the British during the night of the 2nd/3rd November.

At the close of the 2nd, General d'Urbal (French Eighth Army) was confident that the Germans were showing signs of lassitude, and that only one more effort was required to settle with them. He directed that all available French troops, including the 17th, 18th and 31st Divisions, between Zonnebeke and Langemarck, and the cavalry with them, should continue the attack at daybreak. The start of the attack seems to have been delayed by congestion on the roads.<sup>1</sup> No infantry, except that of the 32nd Division south of the Comines Canal near Wytshaete, seems to have moved before 10 A.M., and no progress was made. The 32nd Division did recover a small part of Wytshaete, but only to lose it again. Generals Olleris and Moussy, on either side of the canal, found the opposing forces too strong, though a platoon of the 90th Regiment got into the park of Hollebeke Chateau for a short time. There were, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 43 and Dubois, ii. p. 73.



only thirteen French battalions against at least twenty-<sup>3 Nov.</sup> four German. Near Gheluvelt, north of the Menin road, General Vidal made two attempts, at 10 A.M. and 12 noon. His six battalions advanced from one hundred to two hundred yards, only to be at once counter-attacked and driven back to the British trenches. Between Zonnebeke and Langemark, so far from advancing, the 17th, 18th and 31st Divisions, forming the IX. Corps under General Dubois, were themselves attacked. Near Bixschoote, again in German hands, a small part of the French line was forced back. The greater part of the 43rd Division, in general reserve, was used up in supporting the 32nd Division and Olleris' detachment,<sup>1</sup> so that General d'Urbal had only the 9th Cavalry Division and three and a half battalions left to feed his offensive.

Desultory shelling and sniping of the British line went on all day; but there were no serious attacks on it, and, as the French did not progress, no attempt was made to advance. The battalions were able to carry out a few minor reliefs, to get a certain amount of rest and food, and refill their water-bottles, which in many cases had been empty for 48 hours. A few reinforcements arrived: 6 officers and 450 infantry for the 2nd Division, and 9 officers and 694 men for the 7th Division—totally inadequate, of course, to bring the thinned battalions up to establishment. General Haig renewed his efforts to reconstitute a reserve; but only the 1st Division could spare him a complete battalion, if three hundred men of the 1/Gloucestershire can be so called. He arranged that the 2nd Division should keep at least a battalion in reserve at the western edge of Polygon Wood, and that this should not be used for divisional purposes without consulting him. To form this common reserve General Monro was able to collect only two companies each from the 2/Coldstream and the 1/King's. The 7th Division could find for its own reserve no more than the five hundred survivors of the 22nd Brigade, and Lord Cavan had only the 1/Northamptonshire out of the line.<sup>2</sup>

Remembering, perhaps, the reputation of his Chief Engineer in South Africa for the construction of block-houses, Sir D. Haig sent General Rice to visit all formations

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 249, note.

<sup>2</sup> This battalion was reported on this day to have only two Regular captains and two Regular subalterns doing duty, and to be short of 16 officers and over 500 other ranks.

and direct them to construct small strong points with all-round defence behind their lines, if they had not already done so. These were intended to check temporary successes of the enemy without having to call upon reserves, and to serve as pivots for counter-attacks should he break through. Designed and partly built by the divisional field companies of the Royal Engineers, they were skilfully concealed in gardens, in depressions, and among trees, so that they might come as a surprise to an advancing enemy. Their great value in the later stages of the battle will be seen in due course.

During the day a staff officer from General Foch visited the I. Corps headquarters to enquire after the state of the troops, and assure General Haig that it was only necessary to hold out for a few days longer. Large French reinforcements were expected, but they would be concentrated for a great counter-attack and not used piecemeal to fill gaps in the line.

As regards Allied reinforcements actually in sight, the French 11th Division (XX. Corps) was moving by rail and road to assemble in the area Hazebrouck—Bailléul, and the British Commander-in-Chief received the promise from home of the 8th Division and eleven more Territorial Force battalions.<sup>1</sup>

The only intelligence of importance collected during the day was to the effect that the enemy seemed to be retiring from before Dixmude and Nieuport; and that aviators had seen an unusual amount of rolling stock at Roulers and Lichtervelde stations, and had noticed troops, apparently from the north, engaged in what seemed to be entraining at Thourout and Lichtervelde.<sup>2</sup>

Sir John French telegraphed to Lord Kitchener late at night that both he and General Foch agreed in thinking that the Germans were transporting troops to the Eastern theatre and could not now succeed in the Ypres or Calais direction. Even if violent enemy attacks took place, they would, he added, be made only for the purpose of covering a retirement.

<sup>1</sup> There were already in France four Yeomanry regiments: North-umberland, Oxfordshire, Leicestershire and North Somerset; and eight Territorial Force battalions: The Honourable Artillery Company (H.A.C.), London Scottish, 5/Border Regiment, Artists Rifles, 6/Welch Regiment, 5/Royal Highlanders, 16/London Regiment and 10/Liverpool Regiment.

<sup>2</sup> The only movement of troops from Flanders on this day which can be traced was the entraining of the 6th Cavalry Division for Russia at Courtrai. Poseck, p. 201.

4TH NOVEMBER

4 Nov.

DECREASE IN ENEMY INFANTRY ATTACKS. SHORTAGE  
OF BRITISH FIELD ARTILLERY AMMUNITION

On the 4th November there was a heavy mist all day, turning to rain after 5 P.M. which lasted until nearly 11 P.M. Except for shelling, the day was less eventful than the previous one. General Haig sent his senior General Staff Officer, Br.-General J. Gough, to report to the Commander-in-Chief the extreme necessity for relieving the 1st and 7th Divisions at an early date. Similarly General Pulteney reported that the left of the III. Corps, the 4th Division, required rest; it had now been in continuous battle since the 13th October without relief, which, in view of his long front, he had not the means to effect. The state of the troops was very serious; in a tight place, the British soldier can always be called upon for a final effort, but numbers were now so reduced, that the corps and divisional commanders felt that no plans could be based on the ability of the troops to hold on. So short had gun ammunition become, that General Haig withdrew from each of his divisions three field batteries and one howitzer battery—that is, one-third of the field artillery—and sent them south-west of Ypres, so that the guns and gunners should not be exposed to fire to which they were unable to reply. This was an even more alarming factor, for the increasing want of gun ammunition could not be supplied by an appeal to morale.

There were other factors too that impressed the growing danger of the situation on the higher staffs. For the third time in three days, I. Corps advanced headquarters near the Menin Gate were shelled. Colonel R. J. Marker, the A.A. and Q.M.G., formerly A.D.C. to Lord Kitchener in South Africa, was mortally wounded,<sup>1</sup> and two other officers and three of the subordinate staff were killed. Later in the day advanced headquarters were shifted to the Chateau des Trois Tours at Brielen, two miles north-west of Ypres. The headquarters of General Dubois were also shelled, and he moved out of the town next day. The accurate shelling of certain parts of Ypres was naturally attributed by many to the activities of

<sup>1</sup> He was succeeded, on General Haig's proposal, by Major Travers Clarke, the D.A.A. and Q.M.G. of the corps.

Map 32.  
Sketch  
12.



spies ; but the only suspicious case that came to notice was when, during the night, a person dressed in British staff uniform, who was never identified or caught, put his head into a shelter where an artillery brigade commander was sleeping and ordered him to withdraw his guns at once. Naturally no action was taken on the verbal communication of a stranger.

Severe bombardment of the front was continued by the enemy, but the German infantry did nothing except make a violent attack upon the 3rd Brigade, south of the Menin road, from 12.45 P.M. onwards, and a feeble one upon the 7th Division about 2 P.M. ; neither of which effected anything. In return, in front of Fanshawe's group, on the left of the 2nd Division, the 15th and 60th Batteries destroyed several houses and a redoubt ; and the 2/Highland Light Infantry, working in conjunction with the guns, brought effective rifle fire to bear on the German garrisons as they bolted from their cover.

General d'Urbal had ordered the continuation of the offensive with the same objectives as before ; but this was a formal rather than a practical command, for all his troops had already been put in except the 9th Cavalry Division, and the 11th Division, now beginning to assemble south of Poperinghe. There were "unimportant fluctuations",<sup>1</sup> but no progress. Towards 11 A.M. General d'Urbal proposed to recall into reserve Vidal's detachment, which had only two companies of the 142nd Regiment in the front trenches ; but when the Germans attacked the British 3rd Brigade, as they did soon afterwards, he agreed to leave the two companies, supported by two battalions of the 32nd Regiment. He withdrew the rest of the detachment at night, and the 32nd and companies of the 142nd on the following night, but he still left the two battalions of the 4th Zouaves at Sir D. Haig's disposal at Hooge. These, with the 1/Gloucestershire—which, however, was sent up to the 3rd Brigade during the day—and the 6th Cavalry Brigade, formed the corps reserve.

Sketch  
15.

North of Ypres, also, the French made no progress. An attempt by the 42nd Division (Grossetti) to advance from Dixmude had no success. The Belgians attacked Lombartzyde and Bamburgh Farm and occupied the former place, but were driven back again at night to the Nieuport bridgehead. Attacks made simultaneously on St. Georges,

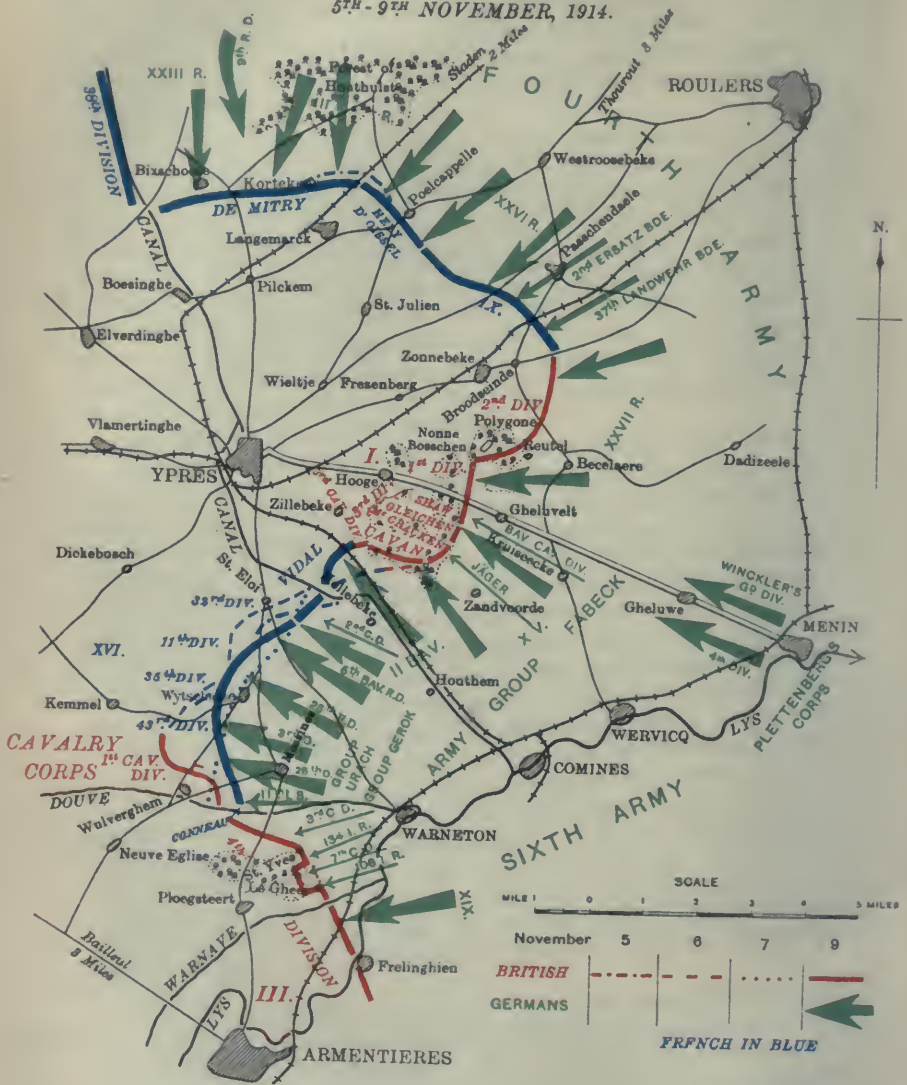
<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 261.



# THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1914.

SKETCH 13.

5TH - 9TH NOVEMBER, 1914.



Ordnance Survey, 1925.



Schoorbakke, and Tervaele<sup>1</sup> had no success, for, as a result of the inundation, these localities could only be approached by narrow causeways. 5 Nov.

No fresh information as to the situation was obtained during the 4th November, except that units of the *III. Reserve* and *XXII. Reserve Corps* had been identified near Merkem and Bixsehoote, indicating that part of these corps had been shifted southwards; but that the whole *XXII. Reserve Corps* had thus moved was not credited, nor was it the case. On this day, the British Commander-in-Chief was notified of the despatch of one thousand, the first consignment, of rifle grenades. Map 32.  
Sketch  
12.

#### 5TH NOVEMBER

##### LOSS OF SPANBROEKMOLEN BY THE FRENCH. INCREASED ENEMY ARTILLERY ACTIVITY

After a fairly quiet night, there was a great deal of shelling on the 5th November, for the mist cleared at 9 A.M. and it was fine all day. Map 33.  
Sketch  
13.

General d'Urbal had again given orders for the continuation of the offensive, convinced by the lassitude of the enemy infantry that there were still hopes of defeating the German attacks north and south of Ypres, and clearing the front for his own advance. The Grand Quartier Général thought otherwise; for during the day General d'Urbal received instructions<sup>2</sup> through General Foeh, informing him that the Belgian theatre of operations had lost its importance, as the Germans had had time to dig themselves in, and there was now no chance of obtaining the success that had been hoped for by means of a rapid advance. It was considered that the enemy offensive against Calais had come to an end, and it was therefore proposed to withdraw troops from the Eighth Army in Flanders, as soon as the situation permitted, for service on some other front. No orders, however, were issued for General d'Urbal to stop the offensive in progress.

Sir John French merely instructed his corps to continue their rôles of the previous day.<sup>3</sup> But he specially directed the Cavalry Corps to take part in the renewed attack on

<sup>1</sup> Schoorbakke is about half-way between Dixmude and Nieuport; the other places named are respectively 3 miles north and 2 miles south of it.

<sup>2</sup> d'Urbal, pp. 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 44.

Messines by Conneau's corps, all three divisions of which had now arrived. General Allenby in consequence instructed the two infantry battalions at his disposal, the 2/K.O.S.B. and 2/K.O.Y.L.I., to co-operate in the French attack on General Conneau's right. General Haig ordered his troops to maintain and strengthen their positions.

The attack on Messines, with the French 3rd and 10th Cavalry Divisions in front and the 1st in reserve, was to begin at 7 A.M.; but in a message timed 10.30 A.M., received at 11.35 A.M., General Conneau informed General Allenby that owing to the non-arrival of an infantry battalion, he had now postponed movement until 3 P.M. Before this hour the Germans took the offensive from Messines. Though shelled by the artillery of Conneau's and Allenby's corps and of the 5th Division, by 5 P.M. they had driven the French from Spanbroekmolen (Hill 75) and beyond for the distance of a kilometre.<sup>1</sup> A very well-led French counter-attack failed to recover any ground. The left of Allenby's front being thus exposed, the line of the Cavalry Corps had to be readjusted. It was swung back so as to run west-north-west from Wulverghem towards Kemmel for about a thousand yards, and thus met the French front nearly at right angles. As well as the cavalry, a brigade of the French 43rd Division seems to have been involved in the loss of Spanbroekmolen and it had to be reinforced by a brigade of the 39th.<sup>2</sup> An attack of the other brigade of the 43rd Division and of the 32nd Division towards Wyttschaete did not lead to any modification of the situation; and a German counter-attack by the *3rd Bavarian Division* completely failed.<sup>3</sup> The reversed S form of the Allied line was now very pronounced, for it bulged out round Ypres and then bent inwards to St. Eloi and Kemmel and then out again to Wulverghem, St. Yves and Frélinghien.

Here it may be pointed out that once Messines ridge was lost its recapture from the west was a most difficult problem. From the Wulverghem ridge, which Messines overlooked, it was impossible to see into the Steenebeek valley that lay between and to give infantry effective artillery support when they went down into it. The valley was like the ditch of a fortress. Thus when the

<sup>1</sup> The attack was carried out by *Infantry Regiment No. 121* and *Fusilier Regiment No. 122* of the *26th Division*. The latter claims 300 prisoners. "*Regt. No. 121*", p. 21. "*Fusilier Regt. No. 122*", p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Palat*, viii. p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> "*Bavarian Inf. Regt. No. 22*", pp. 20-1.

French attacked, they found themselves in a regular trap 5 Nov. with the wire at the bottom of the valley uncut, and the machine guns undamaged. When, after unique mining operations and unlimited expenditure of artillery ammunition, the British Second Army retook Messines ridge in 1917, lines of skeletons of the French who had gone forward so gallantly in November 1914 were found, with pieces of their red and blue uniforms still clinging to them.

The centre of the British front, held by Cavan's detachment and the 7th and 1st Divisions, suffered very severely on the 5th owing to the increased number of guns and the extra ammunition which the enemy brought up. One diary puts it that the Germans seemed to know it was Guy Fawkes' Day. On the other hand, although General Haig had sent off the field a third of his field artillery, he was compelled to issue instructions limiting the issue of ammunition from railhead to 20 rounds per 18-pdr. and 10 rounds per 4.5-inch howitzer. Several of Lord Cavan's battalions had to be withdrawn from the trenches to shelter in the woods; and the 1st and 7th Divisions suffered more than the normal casualties from shell fire. There was also considerable rifle fire, but no infantry advance was made on this part of the front.

#### RELIEF OF THE 7TH DIVISION AND 3RD INFANTRY BRIGADE

Although the 1st Brigade, reported only 900 strong, still had to stay in the line, it was feasible to carry out other reliefs at night. The 3rd Brigade, under Colonel Lovett, with its two attached battalions of the 2nd, on and south of the Menin road, was relieved by the 6th Cavalry Brigade, now equipped with bayonets. The 7th Division was replaced by ten battalions of the II. Corps. Map 33.  
Sketch  
13.

Part of this corps had come out of the line near La Bassée on the 30th/31st October.<sup>1</sup> Now, after hardly a couple of days' rest, it had to be put back into the battle. Its six infantry brigades, which instead of over 4,000 each averaged only 2,470 men, were reorganized into seven groups. The 8th (with the 1/Scots Fusiliers in place of the 1/Gordon Highlanders) and 14th Brigades (with the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 222. It left about half its artillery with all its howitzers and ten and a half battalions to support the Indian Corps, which had relieved it. It had then sent four battalions and the rest of its artillery (5th Division) to assist the Cavalry Corps, and two battalions to the 4th Division.



1/Norfolk and half the 1/Bedfordshire of the 15th Brigade) remained with the Indian Corps; the 13th Brigade, with two battalions only, was with the Cavalry Corps; a fourth group, the 1/Dorsetshire and the 3/Worcestershire, was with the 4th Division; the remaining three groups, under Br.-Generals Shaw, McCracken and Count Gleichen, were ordered to Hooge.<sup>1</sup>

McCracken's and Gleichen's groups, numbering together under 3,000 rifles, left Loere and Dranoutre, respectively, at 8 A.M. But they were unable to proceed beyond Hooge until 6 P.M., and it was not until 2 A.M. on the 6th November that the relief of the 7th Division was completed.<sup>2</sup>

From the time when the 7th Division left Ghent, on the night of the 12th October, after covering the retreat of the Belgian Army from Antwerp, it had had practically no rest, and its first four weeks of war were quite as trying as those of the original expeditionary force in August and September. The advance to Ghent, and the retreat from Ghent to Ypres, a forced march of more than forty miles in forty hours, proved very exhausting to a new formation, and the men—many of whom were only fresh off a sea voyage from South Africa and elsewhere—were already tired when, on the 16th October, they were digging themselves in on the Ypres front, to bear the brunt of the first German attacks. On the 19th, the division advanced in the morning to the outskirts of Menin, but in the afternoon had been obliged to fall back fighting, to the position from which

<sup>1</sup> Group A (Br.-Gen. F. C. Shaw) :

1/Northumberland Fusiliers,

4/Royal Fusiliers,

1/Lincolnshire,

London Scottish (later detached, and its place taken by 2/Duke of Wellington's).

Group B (Br.-Gen. F. W. N. McCracken) :

2/South Lancashire,

1/Wiltshire,

1/Gordon Highlanders,

2/Royal Irish Rifles.

Group C (Br.-Gen. Count Gleichen) :

1/Bedfordshire (half),

1/Cheshire,

2/Duke of Wellington's,

1/Royal West Kent (this battalion remained with the Cavalry Corps from 6 to 13 November).

<sup>2</sup> Its two heavy batteries remained with the I. Corps, and the two field companies were employed on the construction of rear lines. All the artillery went into action again early on the 7th November.

An interesting account of the relief of the 7th Division will be found in Count Gleichen's "The Doings of the 15th Infantry Brigade", p. 206 *et seq.*

it had started, in the face of vastly superior forces of the enemy. From the following day onwards, it had been subjected to an ever increasing volume of shell fire, as the Germans gradually brought more and more artillery into action. Every day the shallow trenches had been blown in, and every night had been spent in their reconstruction, with the result that the troops had but little rest, either by day or night, whilst the casualties mounted up without interruption. The frontage held by the division at all stages of the battle had been so extensive, that it had hardly ever been possible to maintain a substantial reserve, or to withdraw any of the troops in the front line for the rest, of which they were in such need. During a greater portion of the time there had, indeed, been no reserves at all. Up till the 24th October the 7th Division front from Zandvoorde to Zonnebeke had been over seven miles long. On that date it had been reduced to five miles by the transfer of these two villages to the Cavalry Corps and the I. Corps respectively. But, owing to the heavy losses, the number of men per yard was even less than before. On the 27th the front had been reduced to about three miles, at which length it was maintained in spite of the dwindling strength of the division until the relief came. It was against this thinly held line, manned by weary but undaunted men, that the desperate attacks, which have already been described, had been launched in vain by the fresh German divisions, almost without a pause, from the 21st to the 26th October, and from dawn on the 29th October until the close of the 2nd November. During the division's last three days in the line, shell fire and consequent casualties had been heavier than ever, although the enemy infantry attacks had been brought to a standstill and the crisis was over. Numbering 225 officers and 8,486 men in all—with only 4,149 of its establishment of 12,522 infantry, although the ten per cent. reinforcements had been absorbed—it was a mere wreck of the fine force which had landed in Belgium, almost exactly a month before, when withdrawn to rest during the night of the 5th November—its fighting power nearly exhausted, but its fame, like that of the original five divisions, secure for all time.

The line between the left of Cavan's force and the Menin road was now formed by McCraeken's group, on the right, Gleichen's group and the 6th Cavalry Brigade, this last formation having the 3rd Dragoon Guards and 10th Hussars in the front line, and the Royals in support. Of the 7th

Division, the 22nd Brigade was left in Ypres as reserve to the I. Corps. It did not get much repose, for the town was badly shelled by the enemy, as if in exasperation at his want of success. There was happily little loss of life, as by this time hardly eighteen hundred inhabitants and refugees remained. The 20th Brigade (1,405 strong) and 21st marched back to Loere, and thence to rest billets near Bailleul. Of Lovett's six battalions, the 1/Loyal North Lancashire and 1/South Wales Borderers remained as 1st Division reserve; the others went back to Bellewaerde Farm, behind Hooge, as I. Corps reserve. The H.A.C. battalion and the Artists Rifles joined G.H.Q. reserve at Bailleul on the 5th November.

On the front of the 2nd Division, the left of the I. Corps, the enemy endeavoured to gain ground by sapping, approaching, in places, to within forty and even thirty yards of the British trenches. No attack, however, came before 6 p.m., when in the dark, a determined attempt was made against the Highland Light Infantry and the Connaught Rangers. At first it looked as if it might succeed; the supporting redoubts were manned, and every available soldier, cook, groom and servant turned out; but, with the help of the guns of the 70th Battery, the attack was beaten off. The 1/Coldstream, now 100 strong with three newly arrived officers, was sent up to Colonel Pereira, so that he now had all three battalions of his regiment under his command.<sup>1</sup>

In the French IX. Corps, on the left of the 2nd Division, there were encounters "neither numerous nor important", and the position of Dubois's divisions remained unmodified.<sup>2</sup>

Further to the left again, in pursuance of the German plan of attacking the two haunches of the Ypres salient, the *XXIII. Reserve* and *III. Reserve Corps*, with the *44th Reserve Division*, made a strong attack on the sector Langemarck—Bixschoote, held by an infantry regiment of the IX. Corps, de Mitry's detachment and Humbert's 38th Division. The enemy gained a little ground near Bixschoote, and General Dubois was forced to send his only reserve, the 142nd Regiment, to support de Mitry. The Germans, although they had considerable superiority in numbers, admit failure. "A continuation of the offensive here would only have meant a useless sacrifice of life. It was therefore decided, with deep regret, to

<sup>1</sup> On the 7th November this battalion was made up to 190 by a draft.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 79.



“resort to the long and wearisome task of sapping”;<sup>1</sup>— 5 Nov. a decision already reached apparently, as regards the 2nd Division front. Near Dixmude a renewed offensive of the French 42nd Division “had no results”. Further north, Belgian reconnoitring detachments reported the withdrawal of the German forces, and the replacement of the *4th Ersatz Division* before Nieuport by the *38th Landwehr Brigade*, with part of the *Marine Division* behind it, and of the *III. Reserve Corps* by the *4th Ersatz Division*. An intercepted wireless message gave definite information that the whole of the *II. Corps* was coming up. But though the day was clear, there was no information of importance from the air, except of a concentration of troops of all arms at Oosttaverne, behind Wytschaete.<sup>2</sup>

#### GENERAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH

Despite the signs of coming trouble, the orders of General d'Urbal for the 6th still prescribed the offensive, particularly north and south of Ypres, so as to widen the salient and make it less pronounced, whilst the centre kept the enemy fully employed.<sup>3</sup> Those of Sir John French, issued at 11.35 P.M., were short, and merely stated “the orders for to-day hold good for to-morrow's operations”. The British Commander-in-Chief had held a conference of his corps commanders at Bailleul during the day; but, apart from the announcement of the relief of the 7th Division by part of the *II. Corps*, the discussion turned mainly on arrangements for the winter and even on leave to the United Kingdom. There was still a general impression at French and British General Headquarters that the enemy's effort was ended, though a summary, prepared by the British Intelligence Branch, seems to those who read it to-day, to point to quite another conclusion.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> The newly arrived *3rd Division (II. Corps)*, no doubt. Of this, the first identification was the capture, on this day, near Wytschaete, of a soldier of the *2nd Grenadier Regiment* belonging to it. The Operations Branch had of course to consider whether this identification, and the intercepted wireless message, had not been arranged with the intention to mislead.

<sup>3</sup> D'Urbal, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> An appendix to the G.H.Q. Intelligence Summary compiled this day, and issued on 6th November, gives, with amazing accuracy, the probable distribution of the German forces on the front Givenchy—Zonnebeke as follows:—

<i>114th Regt. (57th Brigade, 29th Div. XIV. Corps)</i> <i>10th Brigade (5th Division, III. Corps)</i>	}	Givenchy
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The situation on the night of the 5th/6th November between the Lys and Merckem, after the relief of the 7th Division had taken place, was as follows:—<sup>1</sup>

Map 33.  
Sketch  
13.

<i>Allies.</i>		<i>Germans.<sup>2</sup></i>
British—Part of 4th Division (8 battalions, with 2 of the II. Corps)  British Cavalry Corps (2 cavalry divisions and 2 battalions of II. Corps)	From the Lys at Frélinghien to beyond Wulverghem.	40th Division <sup>3</sup> 106th Regiment †II. Cavalry Corps <sup>4</sup>  5 Jäger battalions <sup>5</sup> †11th Landwehr Brigade (5 battalions)

*VII. Corps* (less 26th Brigade). Neuve Chapelle  
*48th Reserve Division* (*XXIV. Reserve Corps*). Fromelles  
*25th Reserve Division* (*XVIII. Reserve Corps*). Bois Grenier  
*XIX. Corps* (less 48th Brigade). Thence to St. Yves

Fabeck's Army Group:

11th Landwehr Brigade  
 26th Division  
 17th Bavarian Regiment  
 XV. Corps  
 6th Bavarian Reserve Division  
 XXVII. Reserve Corps.

The presence of six cavalry divisions and eight Jäger battalions, constantly shifted, is also correctly noted.

The presence of the *II. Corps* (3rd and 4th Divisions) and *II. Bavarian Corps* (opposite the French) was suspected, "but the evidence is not conclusive", except as regards the 17th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Bavarian Division. The only discrepancies were that the move of the 25th Reserve Division from Bois Grenier to Wyttschaete, which had just taken place, had not come to notice; and that one regiment of the 48th Brigade was with the *XIX. Corps*, as the 106th attacked St. Yves on the 6th November ("Inf. Regt. No. 134", p. 19).

<sup>1</sup> This list is not exhaustive as regards the enemy. There are mentions in German accounts of various odd battalions and cyclist battalions whose positions it has not been possible to identify.

<sup>2</sup> From the 3rd November the formations marked \* formed "Group Urach", under Lieut.-General the Duke of Urach, commanding 26th Division; and from the 5th November, those marked † "Group Gerok", under General von Gerok, commanding XXIV. Reserve Corps.

<sup>3</sup> Poseck, p. 201. The regimental history of the 134th Regiment (89th Brigade, 40th Division, but attached to the Cavalry Corps) mentions, pp. 17-19, the other regiment of the 89th Brigade, the 133rd, the 88th Brigade (40th Division), the 106th Regiment (24th Division), Petersen's Jäger detachment, five cyclist companies, etc., as being in the sector Frélinghien—St. Yves.

<sup>4</sup> 3rd and 7th Cavalry Divisions. It relieved the I. Cavalry Corps on the 4th November. "Ypres", p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Poseck, p. 223, Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7, 10. Of these, according to their regimental histories (p. 18 and p. 57), Nos. 4 and 6 were in reserve at Comines and Warneton.

5 Nov.

<i>Allies.</i>		<i>Germans.</i>
French I. Cavalry Corps (2 cavalry divisions and 1 in reserve; 1 battalion)	From Messines to the Canal.	*26th Division *3rd Division †25th Reserve Division
French 43rd Division 39th    ,, 32nd    ,,		†6th Bavarian Res. Division †2nd Cavalry Division <sup>1</sup> 3rd Bavarian Division
Olleris' detachment (8 battalions)		
French — Moussy's detachment (5 bat- talions)	From the Canal to Menin Road.	4th Bavarian Div.
Cavan's detachment (5 battalions)		†39th Division <sup>1</sup> } XV. †30th Division <sup>1</sup> } Corps
McCracken's group (4 battalions)		†Bavarian Cavalry Division
Gleichen's group (3½ battalions)		
6th Cavalry Brigade		
1st (Guards) Brigade with 2 battalions in divisional reserve	Menin Road to Zonnebeke.	XXVII. Reserve Corps
2nd Division (6 bat- talions and 1 in reserve)		37th Landwehr Brigade
French IX. Corps (17th, 18th and 31st Divi- sions: 19 battalions)	Zonnebeke to Merckem.	2nd Ersatz Brigade
Hély D'Oissel's detach- ment (5th Cavalry Division and 6 bat- talions)		XXVI. Reserve Corps
De Mitry's detachment 6th and 7th Cavalry Divisions and 87th Territorial Division)		44th Reserve Divi- sion
French XXXII. Corps (38th and 42nd Divi- sions, and 89th Terri- torial Division).		III. Reserve Corps XXIII. Reserve Corps Part of Marine Divi- sion.

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 92.



## RESERVES

<i>French.</i>	<i>German.</i>
9th Cavalry Division	Plettenburg's <i>Guard Corps</i> :
11th Division	Winckler's <i>Guard Division</i>
	<i>4th Division</i>
<i>British.</i>	†I. <i>Cavalry Corps</i> : <sup>1</sup>
I. Corps Reserve :	<i>Guard Cavalry Division</i>
2 Zouave battalions	<i>4th Cavalry Division.</i>
22nd Brigade	
3rd Brigade <sup>2</sup>	
7th Cavalry Brigade	
Shaw's group of 4 bat- talions	
G.H.Q. Reserve :	
20th Brigade	
21st       "	
H.A.C. Battalion	
Artists Rifles.	

Thus in the right sector near the Lys there were some twenty-five German battalions and two cavalry divisions,<sup>3</sup> against twelve British battalions and two cavalry divisions ; in the Messines sector, five German divisions and a cavalry division against three and a half French divisions and three cavalry divisions ; from the canal to the Menin road, three German divisions (36 battalions) and a cavalry division (6 regiments) against twelve and a half British and five French battalions, with three cavalry regiments ; from the Menin road to Zonnebeke twenty-eight German battalions against thirteen British battalions ; and in the Bixschoote sector, the equivalent of eight German divisions against the equivalent of six French divisions and two cavalry divisions. Everywhere the Germans had a decided numerical superiority in rifles and field guns, and still more so in heavy guns. This superiority was most marked in the centre, where the British I. Corps and its attached troops stood ; and, whereas the German reinforcements were from quiet parts of the line, the British

<sup>1</sup> Of the original eight cavalry divisions, two had left for Russia, the 6th on the 3rd November, the 9th on the 5th November.

<sup>2</sup> 2nd Brigade is not shown ; two battalions were with Cavan, one with 3rd Brigade, one with 1st Brigade reserve.

<sup>3</sup> For purpose of comparison, a cavalry division may be reckoned as 1½ battalions in rifle strength.

reserves consisted mainly of the fought out battalions of the 7th Division.

## NOTE

## GERMAN PLANS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE BATTLE

Map 33.  
Sketch  
13.

During the 3rd, 4th and 5th November, the fighting along the front of Fabeck's *Army Group* continued.<sup>1</sup>

On or about the 3rd November the German Supreme Command seem to have finally determined to push the offensive against Ypres to a decision, and to that end to attack the haunches of the Allied salient, north and south of the town.

General von Falkenhayn states that "it seemed as though it "only needed perseverance in the offensive to obtain a complete "success".<sup>2</sup> It was obvious that if the German front could only be carried forward to include the ports of Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne, apart from the material advantage, it would be of no greater length, and might even be shorter.<sup>3</sup>

Map 1.

By the morning of the 3rd, the reorganization of the forces of the *Fourth Army*, consequent on the inundation of the Belgian front, was completed,<sup>4</sup> troops having been thinned out from the north and shifted south. From the coast to Merekem (2 miles north of Bixschoote), some eighteen miles, were now only the *38th Landwehr Brigade*, *4th Ersatz Division*, and the *43rd Reserve Division*, all under the G.O.C. *XXII. Reserve Corps*, with part of the *Marine Division* guarding the coast. South of this inundated sector came troops concentrated for attack: from Merekem via Bixschoote to Langemark (inclusive), about six miles, were the *XXIII. Reserve Corps*, *III. Reserve Corps* and *44th Reserve Division*, the centre formation having come from the coast.<sup>5</sup>

Map 33.  
Sketch  
13.

Crown Prince Rupprecht had come to the conclusion that, unless Fabeck's *Army Group* were reinforced, no decisive success could be obtained south-east of Ypres.<sup>6</sup> His fighting generals attributed their failure to break through to the Allied "strongly entrenched positions" and "the continual bringing up of fresh reinforcements". Neither reason, as we know, had any substantial foundation, and "the line after line of defences constructed with "the help of the civil population, forming a deep defensive zone "extending far westward", though said to have been located by the German aviators, had no existence in fact. To deal with the Allies the Prince transferred to Fabeck's *Army Group* "more heavy artillery" and "all the artillery ammunition allotted to the *Sixth Army*", and began to comb out troops from the other parts of his front, which extended right down to Arras. On the 3rd November he ordered the following troops to join Fabeck's *Army Group*: the

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> "Falkenhayn", p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Béthune to Nieuport and Béthune to Boulogne are both about 45 miles; Arras to Nieuport is 60 miles, Arras to the mouth of the Somme only 50.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> "Ypres" does not mention the *Marine Division*. Part was identified on the coast, part near Bixschoote.

<sup>6</sup> "Ypres", whence the details that follow are taken.

*2nd and Bavarian Cavalry Divisions* from the reserve to move at once; the *25th Reserve Division* from opposite the junction of the British III. Corps and Indian Corps, to Wytschaete; all available portions of the *Guard Corps* from near Arras to Roubaix, which place the *1st and 4th Guard Brigades*, made up into a division under Lieut.-General von Winckler, reached by road on the 7th. The *4th Division*, on the French front near La Fère, placed at his disposal by O.H.L., he ordered to Lille, where it began to detrain on the 5th.<sup>1</sup> The *9th Reserve Division* from Verdun was also sent north.<sup>2</sup> On the following day, the 4th, Crown Prince Rupprecht received a definite order from the Supreme Command "to push the attack immediately north of the Comines—Ypres Canal, and to put in "all available forces to break through there". Thus, far from withdrawing, the Germans were bringing up six more divisions—including the *III. Reserve Corps* from the coast—and more heavy artillery for the break-through at Ypres.

Pending the arrival of the *4th Division* and Winckler's *Guard Division*, the Duke of Württemberg's *Fourth Army* and Fabeek's *Army Group* were ordered to continue the attack all along the front. "No time was to be given to the enemy to recover or to strengthen his positions."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A prisoner stated that his corps, the *IV.*, was also warned, but that owing to the attacks on the French found necessary near Arras, the order was cancelled.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> "Ypres", p. 93.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BATTLES OF YPRES (*continued*)

#### RENEWAL OF THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE

#### ZWARTELEEN, ST. ELOI, DIXMUDE

6TH, 7TH, 8TH, 9TH AND 10TH NOVEMBER 1914<sup>1</sup>

(Maps 34, 35, 36, 37, 38 ; Sketches 13, 14, 15)

#### 6TH NOVEMBER

#### GERMAN ADVANCE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE COMINES CANAL. LOSS OF ZWARTELEEN AND HOLLEBEKE WOODS

THE 6th November was another critical day at Ypres. For the British the orders for the previous day held good.<sup>2</sup> The counter-attacks ordered by Generals Foeh and d'Urbal made no progress against the numerically superior enemy forces. A success against the troops of Generals Olleris and Moussy near the canal brought the Germans within two miles of the walls of Ypres, thus endangering the lines of communication and the retreat of the Allied forces in and north of the Ypres salient. A thick fog added to the embarrassment of the Allies.

On the greater part of the front the Germans continued their bombardment, combined, from time to time, with infantry attacks ; but their serious efforts were made near the Menin road and on either side of the Comines Canal.

The attack near the Menin road requires only short notice. Here a Zouave battalion was holding the front astride the road, taken over the previous day from two battalions of the French 32nd Regiment when Vidal's detachment was withdrawn by General d'Urbal.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> No special battle names have been officially assigned to this period.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 45.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 380. The battalion held a flank along the road facing south, and a length of front north and south of it, thus its front was N shaped.

Germans were held off until about 4 P.M., when they drove the Zouaves back. The situation was at once restored by a counter-attack of the 1/Royal Berkshire, and the Zouaves resumed their place.

Near the Comines Canal, according to the commander of the French IX. Corps,<sup>1</sup> the Germans moved early, in spite of the fog, and, as so frequently happened, anticipated the French offensive. The whole of the woods west of Hollebeke were lost. "Olleris' detachment [south of the canal] was driven back and lost the tunnel under the canal [one mile west of the bend]. At the same time east of St. Eloi two chasseur battalions were seized with inexplicable panic and abandoned nearly fifteen hundred metres [a mile] of ground. The intervention of General Olleris was necessary to bring them back to reconquer what had been lost."<sup>2</sup>

North of the canal, where stood Moussy's detachment (5 battalions and 2 groups of artillery), with Cavan's force on its left, the bombardment was particularly heavy. About 10 A.M. two companies of the French 90th Regiment were practically annihilated while on their way up to relieve two others reported to be completely exhausted,<sup>3</sup> and by noon the effect of the shelling on the Irish Guards and 2/Grenadier Guards was reported to be serious. Nevertheless the front was maintained unbroken until 2.30 P.M., when a heavy attack was made on the French by four German columns which emerged from sap-heads driven forward in the fog quite close to the Allied line.<sup>4</sup> The French front was pierced in three places, and the

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 83-4.

<sup>2</sup> The set-back here was considerable. (See Map 2.) Eikhof Farm (1,300 yards E.S.E. of St. Eloi) was lost (Palat, viii. p. 282). The French situation map for the 8th November, supplied at the time to G.H.Q., shows the first line just west of the tunnel under the canal. It then goes south-west at right angles to the canal; behind Eikhof Farm; then west right back to St. Eloi, and then a mile south-west to Bois Quarante. The situation map, however, is not accurate, and errs elsewhere on the side of optimism, as Klein Zillebeke is shown in French hands. The Eighth Army situation map for the 7th November, a copy of which was kindly supplied by the Historical Section of the French General Staff, shows the line passing through Eikhof Farm and thence south-west. "Ypres", p. 94, does not claim that St. Eloi was taken until "the 9th and 10th November".

<sup>3</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 84-5.

<sup>4</sup> "Ypres", p. 93, says that the attack was made by the 39th Division, which had extended its left wing to the canal. General Dubois, p. 84, states that it was made by the 5th Bavarian Regiment of the 4th Bavarian Division (which, if so, was still north of the canal where it had been previously) and the 171st Prussian Regiment of the 39th Division.

troops, taken by surprise, suffered heavy losses and drifted back to the outskirts of Zillebeke.<sup>1</sup> The Germans poured into the gap thus formed and forced back first the flank company of the Irish Guards and then the rest of the battalion, to the support trenches and beyond. The right company of the 2/Grenadier Guards next felt the force of the attack, and, as the day wore on, almost every man of it was killed or wounded by shell fire. Two companies of the Royal Sussex and a company of the Oxfordshire L.I. had, however, been sent up, and they secured the right flank and prevented the British line from being further rolled up; but they could not fill the gap. The bulk of the Germans therefore passed on, penetrating to Zwarteleen (a mile south-east of Zillebeke), and almost to Verbrandenmolen (1,300 yards south of Zillebeke) only three thousand yards from Ypres, and nearer to it than Hooze Chateau. On being informed of the retirement both by General Moussy and the Irish Guards—it was then about 3 P.M.—Lord Cavan called at once on the 7th Cavalry Brigade, at Zillebeke, to stop the German advance. Br.-General Kavanagh who could now see the French retiring, moved his brigade, mounted, south-eastward across their line of retreat. Detaching a squadron of the Royal Horse Guards to cover his right, he dismounted the 2nd and 1st Life Guards, and with the rest of the Blues in support, ordered an advance on Zwarteleen, then evidently in German hands.<sup>2</sup> Meantime General Moussy had collected his scanty reserves. They consisted of only two companies of infantry at Hill 60, south-west of Zwarteleen, four troops of cavalry, and about eighty stragglers. Sword in hand, he led them up on the right of the British Household Cavalry. The village of Zwarteleen and the woods on its left were cleared, and the left of the 7th Cavalry Brigade reached the old trenches of the Irish Guards in touch with Lord Cavan. After a pause, the French went on to reoccupy their old line. They found the enemy in their path and were driven back, carrying with them two of Kavanagh's squadrons which had been moved out towards some houses in order to enfilade the German advance, and also part of his line. The French and the cavalry rallied on the western outskirts

<sup>1</sup> General d'Urbal, p. 17, attributes the German success to Moussy's right flank having been uncovered by Olleris' earlier mishap.

<sup>2</sup> This brigade had reported in the morning that it could muster 600 rifles. It must not be confused with the Composite Regiment of Household Cavalry (containing a squadron from each regiment of Household Cavalry) in the 4th Cavalry Brigade.



of Zwarteleen; but in the confusion there were many casualties, and both Lieut.-Colonel G. C. Wilson, commanding the Royal Horse Guards, and Major the Hon. Hugh Dawnay, commanding the 2nd Life Guards, were killed. The total casualties in the 7th Cavalry Brigade were 17 officers and 78 other ranks.

Meantime all available guns had been turned on the sector menaced. General Haig was naturally alarmed for his right flank, uncovered by the retirement of Allied troops over whom he had now no control. At 3.25 P.M. he ordered two battalions, and later two more, from his reserve—the four being the 1/Queen's, 1/Gloucestershire and 2/Welch of the 3rd Brigade, and the 2/K.R.R.C. (2nd Brigade), some thousand men in all—under Colonel Lovett, to report to Lord Cavan. But, owing to the fog and blocks on the road, it was 6 P.M. and dark, before an attack could be got in motion against Zwarteleen. The 2/K.R.R.C. and Gloucestershire were sent forward by Colonel Lovett, but after advancing a hundred yards, they came under machine-gun fire, and fell back. Lord Cavan, under whom Sir D. Haig had placed all troops near Zillebeke, thereupon decided not to attempt any further attack that night. The British line was now readjusted so as to include part of General Moussy's front, and the 3rd Brigade's ran from the railway over Hill 60 and through the western end of Zwarteleen, to join up with the refused right flank of Cavan's force. A welcome reinforcement, also sent up by General Haig, was the 2/R. Munster Fusiliers.<sup>1</sup> This fresh battalion, over eight hundred strong, went into the line at 6.30 P.M. between the 3rd Brigade and the Irish Guards. Of Cavan's force only half the 2/Grenadier Guards and the Oxfordshire L.I. stood on the ground they had held in the morning. Its line from right to left, was now formed by the Royal Munster Fusiliers, Irish Guards, two companies of the Royal Sussex, one company of the Oxfordshire L.I., 2/Grenadier Guards, three companies of the Oxfordshire. The 7th Cavalry Brigade was placed in reserve at Verbrandenmolen, behind the right of the British front. It was 3 A.M. before the last squadron had been relieved by Lovett's brigade.

The 22nd Brigade, eleven hundred strong, only taken out of the line and sent into rest in Ypres on the previous

<sup>1</sup> This battalion, reconstructed after its destruction at Etreu on 27th August 1914, had for some days been engaged in digging rear lines, and had now joined I. Corps reserve.

day, was also moved up by General Haig to join the 7th Cavalry Brigade; but it did not arrive at Zillebeke until 10 P.M., and was not engaged. Nor was it found necessary to employ the French 6th Cavalry Division, placed at Haig's disposal by General d'Urbal. Shaw's group of the II. Corps,<sup>1</sup> which had marched during the day from Bailleul, was kept at Hellfire Corner on the Menin road from 4 P.M. to 11 P.M. in case it might be required to support the 2nd Division, against which an attack seemed threatening near Polygon Wood. Nothing, however, materialized, and at 11 P.M. Br.-General Shaw was directed to relieve the 6th Cavalry Brigade in the trenches just south of the Menin road. His group (mainly 9th Brigade), with McCracken's and Gleichen's (mainly 7th and 15th Brigades) already in the line, was placed under Major-General F. Wing, who also was given the 3rd Division staff, part of the 1st Division artillery and of the engineers of the 3rd and 5th Divisions.

At 6 P.M. Commandant Requin, of General Foch's staff, arrived to assure Sir D. Haig that the French line which had been pushed back so close to Ypres would be re-established next day. At the same hour General d'Urbal assembled the commanders of the XVI. Corps, I. Cavalry Corps, 39th and 43rd Divisions, at Poperinghe, and directed them to renew the attacks on the front Messines—St. Eloi as the best way of restoring the situation.<sup>2</sup>

The night closed with the Germans in possession of Zwarteleen and close to St. Eloi, both less than two miles from Ypres. A deep wedge had been driven in at the junction of the French and British lines.

#### 7TH NOVEMBER

#### COUNTER-ATTACK OF LAWFORD'S BRIGADE AT ZWARTELEEN

#### GERMAN ATTACKS ON LE TOUQUET, PLOEGSTEERT WOOD, HERENTHAGE WOOD AND BROODSEINDE

The 7th November was misty and marked the definite commencement of winter weather: mud henceforth seriously interfered with operations, and cold at night made sleeping in the open difficult, if not impossible. Map 35.  
Sketch  
13.

To use the words of Sir John French's telegram to the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 86-7.

War Office, there was a considerable amount of fighting from Frélinghien, on the Lys, to Zandvoorde, without decisive result. To the troops it seemed that there was fighting all day and all along the line; and the feeling of serious battle was spread to the rear by the continuous shelling of Armentières and Ypres. The latter town was set on fire in many places, so that passage through it was rendered dangerous and precarious; and it became necessary to employ on fire duty the field companies R.E. of the 1st Division. Much labour had already been expended in keeping open and improving the roads; and, fortunately, under direction of Br.-General Rice, new routes for all traffic were in course of construction round the counterscarp of the fortifications north and south of Ypres, and along the railway. Extra bridges, too, for wheeled traffic had been made across the canal. In Armentières, a larger and more scattered locality, the houses were hardly touched by the bombardment. The shelling of the towns, therefore, did not affect the military situation.<sup>1</sup>

On the north side of the Comines Canal the five battalions of General Moussy—reduced by losses to half their original strength—had a longer line to hold than before, owing to the direction of the canal making this sector wider behind Zwarteleen than in front of the village. The situation near the canal was still the cause of gravest anxiety to General Haig. It was obvious that if the Germans made a further effort there, the whole of the British line lying to the northward of Zwarteleen might have to go back to a north and south line through Ypres. Several times he communicated his views to the Commander-in-Chief, who was at pains to impress them on General Foch. At 2.30 A.M. on the 7th, Major J. Charteris, whom General Haig had sent to the French, returned with the assurance that the original line should be reoccupied. No reinforcements, however, arrived during the night, and at daylight General Moussy's force was only just sufficient to enable him to extend his right to the canal to connect with Olleris' detachment, and to hold, thinly, a line parallel to the road which passes through the tunnel under

<sup>1</sup> The German excuse for the bombardment of Ypres is that "the towers of Ypres . . . gave such a fine view of the whole countryside, and were used by artillery observers". "Ypres", p. 97. A glance at the contoured or layered map will dispose of this contention. The towers, it may be authoritatively stated, were not so used.



the canal.<sup>1</sup> The enemy did not, however, make any forward movement against Moussy, and not a single German was encountered when his troops moved towards the canal to fill the gap, for the enemy was fully employed by the British north of him. 7 Nov.

At 9.30 A.M. General Foch informed G.H.Q. that the French line was re-established, but at 1 P.M. he learnt that no steps had been taken to reoccupy the lost trenches, and he issued definite orders for the original line to be recovered. It appears from British records that one battalion of the 53rd Regiment, from the 32nd Division, reached General Moussy at 1.40 P.M. on the 7th, and two others and a group of artillery at 10.30 P.M. In any case, it was not until 5.15 P.M. that General Moussy informed Lord Cavan that he was prepared to co-operate. It was then dark, and the British troops on the spot were too exhausted by the fighting that had taken place during the day—now to be related—for further effort to be expected of them.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Cavan had realized that the situation could not wait, and at 4 A.M., before daylight, on the 7th, he had despatched the 22nd Brigade (Br.-General Lawford), fourteen officers and eleven hundred men strong, towards the junction of the 3rd Brigade and his own group, about five hundred yards north-east of Zwarteleen. From his headquarters outside Zillebeke, where the 22nd Brigade had arrived six hours earlier, it moved through the woods by a footpath. All possible preparations for a counter-attack had already been made by the Royal Sussex, and, informed by Lieut.-Colonel E. H. Montrésor of the local situation, General Lawford assembled his men in front of the left of the 3rd Brigade, under cover of a slight rise. At 6.15 A.M., just as it was beginning to get light, he sent his brigade forward in a heavy mist against the German trenches, which were partly in the open, partly in projecting salients of the woods, only a hundred and fifty yards away. The 2/Queen's<sup>3</sup> led the attack in two lines, supported on the right by the 1/South Staffordshire, with the 2/Warwickshire in reserve. The firing of a gun had been fixed on as the signal for all troops near

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 287, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> General Foch during the day removed the commander of the XVI. Corps, to which Olleris' and Moussy's detachment were attached, and replaced him by General Grossetti of the 42nd Division. Dubois, ii. p. 89. Palat, viii. p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> The survivors of the 1/R. Welch Fusiliers (86, with no officers) were attached to the Queen's.

to take part in the counter-attack, but its discharge was indistinguishable amidst the noise of battle, and only the 1/Gloucestershire (3rd Brigade) joined in, and this as the result of a definite order. It was too foggy to support the attack with covering fire, but, nevertheless, the charge was successful to the extent that the first enemy trench was occupied and three machine guns captured. All efforts to advance further and across a road beyond broke down under enfilade fire. The Germans were now alarmed; the area was plastered with heavy machine-gun fire and swept by artillery fire, most of the shells fortunately going over the heads of the British. No further movement of the 3rd and 22nd Brigades was possible, and, the 7th Division artillery coming into action, a fire combat continued all day.<sup>1</sup> At dusk, about 4 P.M., the French not having appeared to co-operate, Lawford's battalions and the Gloucestershire having both flanks open, and the Germans persistently working round the right flank, the line was withdrawn to its original starting position, and at night the 22nd Brigade was brought back into reserve. Its losses for the day amounted to 304 other ranks, and ten out of its fourteen officers. Among the dead was Captain J. F. Vallentin, of the 1/South Staffordshire, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallant leading in the attack, and his many previous acts of great bravery.

During the morning General Haig had placed the 7th Division artillery, one battalion of Zouaves and the 3rd Cavalry Division at Lord Cavan's disposal; and, later, Maison-Rouge's cuirassier brigade and Morel's light cavalry brigade, sent him by the ever-willing General Dubois. The Zouaves and cavalry were not used: Lawford's counter-attack and the guns of the 7th Division were sufficient to stop the German *39th Division*, if it ever had the intention of pushing further. The artillery was of particular service in breaking up a concentration of enemy troops which threatened an attack against the salient in the line of Cavan's group, formed where his right had been forced back on the previous day. The misty weather, however, proved detrimental to the less numerous but better shooting British artillery, making it impossible to locate and neutralize the enemy's guns, which, in con-

<sup>1</sup> The German account has nothing to say about the fighting here on the 7th and 8th November except that the Allied counter-attacks had no success. "Ypres", p. 94. The enemy no doubt suffered heavy loss.

sequence, were able to fire heavily, although not very 7 Nov. effectively, on the infantry trenches. In the French XVI. Corps, the 43rd Division made slight progress towards the recovery of the ground lost near Spanbroekmolen and the 32nd Division advanced a little towards Wytschaete.

Near the Menin road the efforts of the German bombardment were acutely felt by Wing's division and Fitz-Clarence's brigade; for the line there had been forced back, certainly little by little, but so constantly that the defenders had never been long enough on the same position to complete thoroughly good trenches, much less to erect wire and construct effective shelters. Towards 2.30 P.M. on the 7th, after a methodical bombardment, the enemy made a heavy attack on and south of the Menin road against the groups of McCracken, Gleichen and Shaw of Wing's division, and Lagarde's Zouave battalion,<sup>1</sup> now supported by the 1st Division artillery. After fighting that lasted until night, this attack was successfully repulsed on the road by the Zouaves, and by the right and left of Wing's division; but it made a little progress at the junction of Gleichen's and Shaw's groups south of Herenthage Chateau, held by half the 1/Bedfordshire and the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers. The enemy broke through between these two battalions; and then, apparently in obedience to an unauthorized order passed down the line, the men of the Bedfordshire in the front trench began to retire. On the mistake being discovered, they were led forward again; but, although assisted by a company of the 1/Cheshire on the right, they failed to regain all their trenches, and lost 5 officers and 77 men, but captured 21 Germans.<sup>2</sup> The Northumberland Fusiliers with the 1/Lincolnshire in support, came forward with the Bedfordshire, but were equally unable to recover the lost ground. At night, therefore, yet another new line—a hundred yards short of the old one—across the point of entry of the Germans, was occupied by the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Bedfordshire. The divisional reserve, the 2/Duke of Wellington's, was moved forward, but no reinforcements were sent to the threatened point, though for a moment 3rd Division headquarters, which Sir D. Haig happened to be visiting when the break occurred, were alarmed by the sight of stragglers drifting back.

<sup>1</sup> The battalion lost 2 officers killed and had 74 other casualties on this day.

<sup>2</sup> Belonging to the 136th Regiment of the 30th Division, XV. Corps.



A somewhat similar attack was made on the 4th Division front, Le Touquet (opposite Frélinghien) to St. Yves. Just two and a half miles in length, this portion of the line was held by the 1/Rifle Brigade and 1/Hampshire from the river to Le Gheer and thence past the east side of Ploegsteert Wood to St. Yves by the 3/Worcestershire (lent from the 7th Brigade) and 2/R. Inniskilling Fusiliers: so each battalion covered more than half a mile. The main attack, according to an officer prisoner, was directed against Ploegsteert Wood by six infantry and two *Jäger* battalions.<sup>1</sup> The shelling of the line from 2.30 A.M. onwards was more than usually severe, and the 3/Worcestershire, which had suffered heavy losses near La Bassée, was driven from its front trenches to the shelter of Ploegsteert Wood. Towards 7.30 A.M., in the thick mist, what appeared to be a large mob of Germans broke in through the centre and right of the Worcestershire line and began to spread into the wood. A German officer and sixty men found behind the line were promptly dealt with by the 1/Hampshire though at the cost of considerable casualties. This, perhaps, discouraged other Germans in the wood from pressing on; but it was not until two hours later, when the mist had thinned a little, that the situation became properly known to Br.-General Hunter-Weston, commanding the sector, and he was able to take measures to cope with it. The first counter-attack was carried out by the two support companies of the 3/Worcestershire, and a company each from the 1/Irish Fusiliers and 2/Lancashire Fusiliers. It was assisted by concentration of artillery fire on the area behind the leading Germans, and at once put a stop to their renewed attempts to push forward; but it did not recover any lost ground. Further counter-attacks were made by two support companies of the 2/Inniskilling Fusiliers, which cleared the wood, and by the 1/East Lancashire, which expelled the Germans from all their gains, except a group of houses just in front of the wood round the White Estaminet north of Le Gheer. As it was the first occasion on which the 4th Division line had been pierced—although at a point not held by a battalion belonging to the division—without the situation being restored almost immediately, desperate efforts were made, continued into the night, to deprive the enemy of his

<sup>1</sup> "Fusilier Regiment No. 134", p. 19, mentions that the *106th Regiment (24th Division)*, brought up from the south side of the Lys, and part of the *134th (40th Division)*, attacked the south end of St. Yves.

small conquest. They were, however, unsuccessful, and 7 Nov. he remained in possession.

The attack on the 1/Rifle Brigade at Le Touquet (opposite Frélinghien) had no success, though the situation of the battalion, heavily shelled and enfiladed from the south, was very far from an easy one. At 3.30 P.M. the Germans, who had sapped quite close up to and even under the wire, charged with unusual enthusiasm and disregard of casualties; but they never managed to break in. The 1/King's Own from divisional reserve south of the Lys arrived about 6 P.M., but it was not necessary to employ it. Three battalions of the corps reserve near Armentières were placed by General Pulteney at Major-General H. F. M. Wilson's disposal, and one of them, the 2/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (19th Brigade), was moved forward to Le Bizet, half-way between Armentières and Ploegsteert. But the enemy made no further effort, and there was no need for its services. Owing to its good trenches, the losses of the 4th Division for the day only amounted to about four hundred, of which 208 were in the 3/Worcestershire, temporarily attached to it.

On the extreme left wing, two attacks on the 2nd Division deserve mention. At 4.40 A.M., the enemy, having here also sapped up to within fifteen to fifty yards in the fog, rushed a company of the 2/Highland L.I. There was no time to open fire on the Germans and a hand-to-hand fight ensued in semi-darkness, in which fifty-four men of the 241st and 243rd Regiments (53rd Reserve Division) were captured, and eighty killed or wounded, at a cost of forty-five casualties.<sup>1</sup>

Twelve hours later, as it was growing dark, a similar attack was made on the 2/Connaught Rangers, part of which left its trenches; but three companies of the 1/Royal Berkshire, which were in support, counter-attacked immediately, and reoccupied the original line. The 5th Field Company R.E. was now moved up in support of the Connaughts and the small strong points in rear of the line were manned by the divisional cyclist company. But

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. W. L. Brodie, 2/Highland Light Infantry, received the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in clearing the enemy out of the trenches. (The date 11th Nov. in the London Gazette appears, according to the regimental records, to be an error.) Lieut. A. Martin Leake, serving with the 5th Fd. Ambulance, 2nd Division, who had received the V.C. in S. Africa in 1902, was awarded a bar to the V.C. for conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty, especially in the period 29th October-8th November 1914, near Zonnebeke, in rescuing wounded, close to the enemy's trenches under constant fire.

although the Germans remained quite close to the front line, they gave no further trouble.

Thus the orders given to the enemy divisions—to attack all along the line with the object of preventing the British from recovering from their fatigue, or strengthening their position—had merely resulted in unsuccessful isolated attacks at five places. No fresh information as regards the enemy was acquired on the 7th November, beyond the item that the presence of the *3rd Division* opposite the French was established; and statements of prisoners taken from the *106th Regiment* which made it certain that the whole of the *XIX. Corps* was opposite the 4th Division, mostly north of the Lys.

#### 8TH NOVEMBER

#### DANGEROUS SITUATION NEAR THE COMINES CANAL. SPASMODIC GERMAN ATTACKS. FAILURE TO RECOVER LE GHEER. SERIOUS FIGHTING ON THE MENIN ROAD

Map 36.  
Sketch  
13.

The 8th November was dull and cloudy, but this weather was welcomed by the infantry in the trenches, for it made enemy artillery observation impossible; nevertheless the German fire though less accurate was heavy. The fighting was of the same character as on the previous day: the enemy bombardment was continued without pause and there were frequent and vigorous enemy infantry attacks. According to a captured officer, the German orders were "to attack somewhere every day", and this gives the clue to the futile and disconnected operations of the five days between the 5th and 11th November.

During the morning Sir John French and General Haig attended a conference at General Foch's headquarters at Cassel, at which the French commander exhibited his characteristic optimism. But he was unable to promise any fresh troops to relieve the wearied British battalions. The British commanders pointed out to him the danger of the situation near the Comines Canal, where General Moussy had not recovered his lost ground, so that the enemy was within two miles of Ypres; they emphasized that the safety of the British forces to the northward and the communications of all the troops under Sir D. Haig, which passed through Ypres, depended on a weak French detachment, over which the G.O.C. I. Corps had no control. A short German advance there would result in all his command being



cut off. To this General Foch replied that he had issued **8 Nov.** formal orders for the line at the canal bend to be retaken, and seemed to regard it as already done, although admitting that he had little information of the actual position of the French line. In this dilemma Sir John French could do no more than confirm the authority he had already given General Haig to deal direct with General d'Urbal, the commander of the French Eighth Army—that is of all the French troops in the Ypres neighbourhood.

As a result, perhaps, of this conference, General Vidal, of the 31st Division, was, in the course of the day, placed in command of the Olleris and Moussy detachments on either side of the canal. No reinforcements however were sent to him, except two Territorial battalions, who proceeded to dig trenches, "as a basis for advance", from Voormezele (2 miles south of Ypres), through Zillebeke to Hooge. The Germans fell back a little on the north side of the canal, and General Moussy made a small advance with his right during the night of the 7th/8th, so that he again held a flank along the canal; but as his left did not move, the right of Lord Cavan's detachment still remained bent back in order to keep connection with him. Olleris was again violently attacked from Hollebeke Park, but managed to stop the Germans from penetrating beyond Eikhof Farm.

General d'Urbal's orders for the 8th showed a slight, but significant, verbal change. Instead of directing, as on the previous day, a continuation of the offensive, he changed the phrase into a "continuation of the operations in progress", and further prescribed that the inviolability of the front St. Eloi—canal bend—Klein Zillebeke should be assured. He moved up the 11th Division, his last reserve, behind Olleris' troops into the area St. Eloi—Voormezele—Dickebusch, south of the canal.

All the French forces except Vidal's attempted to continue the offensive, but the enemy was far too strong in guns and men for any hope of success. Conneau's position near Messines remained unchanged; the 43rd Division failed to retake Spanbroekmolen; the 39th and 32nd Divisions made only some small gain of ground; de Mitry's force remained stationary; the attack near Merkem (2 miles north of Bixschoote) of the XXXII. Corps, reinforced by its 42nd Division, was stopped by a German

counter-attack.<sup>1</sup> The general situation was summed up in Sir John French's telegram to the War Office, sent off after he had been informed that there were practically no Regular troops in the United Kingdom, and that the total reinforcements available for him were 150 officers and 9,500 other ranks.<sup>2</sup> It ran :—" We shall be able to maintain our present position and can do no more until the pressure of superior forces is taken off us by French reinforcements from the south, or, which is more probable, by the enemy reducing his forces to meet the advance of the Russians".

The operations on the 8th of the British troops can be briefly told. On the right, near the Lys, the 1/Rifle Brigade of the 4th Division was not troubled again. Fighting continued all day round Le Gheer, and the reserves sent to the 11th Brigade were practically all absorbed. A complete line was formed round three sides of the group of houses held by the enemy, but, owing to these houses being sheltered by the high trees on the edge of the wood, it was difficult to get artillery fire on to them, especially with an allowance of only 6 rounds per gun per day to the two batteries concerned. Further, the area was so small that it could not be shelled without withdrawing the British from the trenches in the neighbourhood, and this involved a risk of losing them. The expulsion of the enemy was a job for trench mortars and none were yet available. During the afternoon the 21st Brigade (1,500 strong) was placed at the disposal of Br.-General Hunter-Weston, but as it could not arrive before 4.30 P.M. he decided to postpone further attack. His own units in the fight had become intermixed and required reorganizing, and there were still hopes of getting a howitzer into position during the night to clear the enemy out.

Shelling went on with monotonous regularity, but no attack was made on Lord Cavan's or General Moussy's troops, although their positions, both strategically and tactically—owing to their proximity to Ypres, and to the salient that the British line presented—seemed, literally, to be asking for it. The enemy's front line too was only eighty to one hundred yards away. The German explanation is that "the *II. Bavarian Corps* [the corps concerned] "was kept busily employed by hostile counter-attacks

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. pp. 88-9. Palat, viii. p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> The 8th Division had left England and is not included in the total, and only the earliest units of the 27th had arrived from abroad.

“near the canal, and the enemy offered very stubborn resistance” 8 Nov. 1

During the day Lord Cavan reported to General Haig, who visited him, that the units of the 3rd and 22nd Brigades<sup>2</sup> and the Irish Guards were no longer fit for effective movement, and that they required twenty-four hours' rest to recover. The G.O.C. I. Corps immediately took steps to replace them, and Lord Cavan's force underwent an almost complete transformation.

The front of the 2/K.R.R.C. (which had come up with the 3rd Brigade), on Lord Cavan's right, was taken over during the day by the French, and the battalion went into local reserve; at night the five hundred men called the 3rd Brigade were relieved by five hundred cavalymen of the 3rd Cavalry Division; the London Scottish, 600 strong, took the place of the 2/Oxfordshire L.I. and 2/Royal Sussex, and these battalions became corps reserve. The eight hundred survivors of the 22nd Brigade were sent back during the night to Loere. The Irish Guards, now reorganized into two weak companies, and the 2/Grenadier Guards, which held the dangerous salient, were left in the line.

The only serious attack of the day was made by the German *143rd Regiment (30th Division)* and part of the *54th Reserve Division*<sup>3</sup> just north of the Menin road, against the edge of the woods in front of Veldhoek Chateau. These woods consisted of small oak and chestnut trees interspersed with maple and nut, and the grounds of the chateau were filled with large rhododendron bushes, so that good cover from view was afforded. The front here was held by part of Lagarde's Zouave battalion, part of the 1/Loyal North Lancashire (only 200 strong) and the 1/Scots Guards. About 12.45 P.M., after being heavily shelled, the Zouaves and Loyal North Lancashire—the Scots Guards held on—fell back on the two reserve companies of the Loyals, entrenched behind Veldhoek Chateau, exposing the flank south of the road of the 4/Royal Fusiliers. The reserve immediately made a counter-attack, in which the Zouaves joined, and all the Germans who had entered the woods were killed or

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, p. 94. “Bavaria”, p. 144, says “decisive results were not to be obtained in this part of the field”.

<sup>2</sup> The strength of the 3rd Brigade (Colonel Lovett) was:—1/Queen's, 50; 1/Gloucestershire, 220; 2/Welch, 220. The 1/South Wales Borderers were in corps reserve at Hooge. On the evening of the 8th, the 2/Munster Fusiliers took the place of the 1/Queen's in the brigade. The 22nd Brigade numbered 5 officers and 800 men.

<sup>3</sup> “Ypres”, p. 94; but among the prisoners men of the *242nd Regiment (53rd Reserve Division)* were identified.



captured. Other troops were set in motion to help them : on the left, two companies from Bonner's Zouave battalion from the reserve, and the support companies of the 1/Scots Guards ; and on the right, two companies of the 2/Duke of Wellington's and part of the 4/Royal Fusiliers which had maintained its position. Aided also by the fire of the XXXIV. Brigade R.F.A., the Zouaves and the Loyals re-established themselves in their trenches and captured 2 officers and 80 men of the 143rd Regiment. The Germans, however, attacked again in greater force, and about 2.30 P.M. drove the Allies back into the Veldhoek Woods once more. Major-General Landon (1st Division) sent up his last reserve, the 1/Northamptonshire<sup>1</sup> (2nd Brigade) and the divisional cyclist company.\* The Germans were pushed back to the far edge of the woods, but the trenches of the Loyals were not recovered again until about 4.15 P.M., when Br.-General FitzClarence made a counter-attack with his brigade reserve (90 men of the 1/Black Watch, under Captain V. M. Fortune) from the northern flank down the front of the Scots Guards. A howitzer was brought up to shell the enemy out of the Zouave trenches near the road and these also were recaptured. The Germans, though still remaining close to the British line, now abandoned their efforts north of the road, and at 6 P.M. made an attack under cover of darkness on the 1/Lincolnshire and 1/Northumberland Fusiliers south of it ; but though in places they reached the parapet, they were repelled with heavy loss. During the day's fighting Lagarde's Zouave battalion lost 3 officers and 304 out of 600 men ; the 1/Scots Guards lost 6 officers and about one hundred rank and file ; the Loyals, practically the same number ; the Duke of Wellington's, 90 ; and the Royal Fusiliers, 60.

The reliefs in Lord Cavan's detachment ordered by General Haig have already been mentioned. He now issued instructions for a series of other changes, so that the 1st Division should be on the right where Cavan's force stood ; the 3rd Division between it and the Menin road ; and the 2nd Division north of the road. It did not prove practicable to carry out this much needed reorganization completely, and the composite 3rd Division (Major-General Wing) remained interposed between the two wings of the 1st Division until the close of the battle. Major-General T. Capper was placed in command of the general reserve,

<sup>1</sup> Withdrawn from Cavan's force on 7th November.

which included the survivors of his own 7th Division and 8 Nov. a few battalions of the II. Corps.

The intelligence gathered during the day tended to show that the Germans were increasing their forces near Ypres. A captured order of General von Martini, commanding the *II. Bavarian Corps*, issued at Lille on the 29th October, proved that his whole corps was north of the Lys; but its *4th Bavarian Division*—actually opposite Olleris and Moussy—had not yet been located. The arrival of the whole of the *II. Corps* was ascertained and its *3rd Division* was correctly located near Wytschaete; but its *4th Division*—not yet in the line—was erroneously placed just west of the Forest of Houthulst, owing to the identification of prisoners belonging to one of its regiments on the French front near Merckem. From prisoners taken at Ploegstercert Wood, the presence of part of the *24th Division*, as well as the *40th Division* of the *XIX. Corps* north of the Lys, was also definitely confirmed. The Allied officers who realized what these indications might portend, and understood the German predilection for exploiting weak spots, had just cause to consider the situation a serious one. Yet their faith in the khaki line never for a moment wavered.

#### 9TH NOVEMBER

#### THE FRENCH REGAIN GROUND NEAR THE COMINES CANAL. A NIGHT ATTACK TO RECOVER LE GHEER FAILS

The 9th November was uneventful. There was less mist than on the previous day, but it was still too thick for aeroplane observation. The enemy made some feint of attacking, and annoyed the British with rifle grenades, to which, having very few, they could make no effective reply.

Map 37.  
Sketch  
13.

The French 11th Division arrived near Voormezele in reserve behind Olleris' detachment, and some ground in front of St. Eloi and near Spanbroekmolen was recovered. Owing to the French units in front line having become—like the British—somewhat intermixed in the course of the fighting, the forces under General Grossetti (*XVI. Corps*) between the British III. and I. Corps were re-organized in groups bearing the names of their commanders. Next the Douve in front of Wulverghem to keep connection with the British 4th Division was Mazel's group: a

dismounted detachment of the French 1st Cavalry Division and the 156th Infantry Regiment. Then came Lanquetot's group (43rd Division) and Dantant's group (39th Division) in a re-entrant embracing Spanbroekmolen, Bouchez's group (32nd Division) opposite Wytschaete, Olleris' group, and—north of the canal—Moussy's group.<sup>1</sup>

The reserve trenches dug by the French Territorials on the Voormezele—Zillebeke—Hooze line were so heavily bombarded by the German artillery that they were practically destroyed.

In the 4th Division area, the group of houses held by the enemy in front of Ploegsteert Wood was shelled all day by three field batteries, and a field and a siege howitzer ; and at 11.30 P.M., an attack was made on it by the 1/East Lancashire, 2/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and 2/Lancashire Fusiliers, each battalion putting in two companies. Success was gained on the right, but as no progress was made elsewhere, the trenches regained were abandoned before daylight.

Elsewhere there is nothing to record, except reliefs. In particular, the Irish Guards were replaced by the 1/South Wales Borderers from corps reserve. The general reserve now consisted of the 20th and 22nd Brigades,<sup>2</sup> and the I. Corps reserve of the 3rd Brigade (less the 1/South Wales Borderers), the 2/Royal Sussex, the Irish Guards and the 3rd Cavalry Division (very few rifles as 500 were with Lord Cavan). By this day all the machine guns lost or unserviceable, except two, had been replaced.

Sir D. Haig paid a visit to General d'Urbal, and it was arranged between them that the former should keep his reserve on the Menin road, whilst the latter should be responsible for the Zillebeke road.

Lord Kitchener this day suggested to the Commander-in-Chief that he should endeavour to find out from General Joffre what his plans were, and request him either to bring reinforcements northwards—as the Germans were doing—or to make a diversion at some other part of the front. To this Sir John French replied that he had been told by

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 294, states that the line was re-established (see Map 2) in front of Voormezele and the wood (Bois Carré) north-east of Vierstraat. The French situation map for the 9th November shows St. Eloi behind the French line, and a *précis* kindly supplied by the Historical Section of the French General Staff speaks only of a violent attack on Olleris which was broken up, thanks to the support of Vidal's detachment north of the canal.

<sup>2</sup> The 21st Brigade was sent in reserve to the 4th Division.







General Foch some days earlier that the Generalissimo <sup>9 Nov.</sup> considered that a withdrawal of the enemy had already begun and that twelve to fifteen German corps would be gradually transferred to the Eastern theatre. General Joffre expected that to cover this withdrawal, the enemy would heavily attack at one or two places. These blows had now been struck, and had been repulsed with severe loss to the enemy. It was proposed to wait a few days longer to see what further development of the situation took place before deciding on further action.

Subsequent events proved the general correctness of the appreciation, but it was wrong as to time, and the British had to bear the brunt of the mistake: there was still one great blow to be struck in Flanders before Falkenhayn desisted from his efforts in the West and turned his face Eastwards, not for good strategic reasons but to bring comfort to Germany's discouraged and weakening Ally, Austria-Hungary.

#### 10TH NOVEMBER

#### GERMAN ATTACKS NORTH-EAST OF YPRES, AND LOSS OF DIXMUDE

As far as the British troops were concerned, the 10th <sup>Map 38.</sup> November proved a comparatively quiet day. For the <sup>Sketch</sup> French, it was a day of stress and anxiety:—their attacks <sup>14.</sup> were anticipated by the enemy and they were in several places driven back. General Foch drew the correct conclusion that another attack on a great scale had been begun, yet events led him to believe, as he stated in the evening to the British Commander-in-Chief, that the Germans were again designing to strike between Ypres and the sea.

A desperate attack was made on the French front from Langemarck to Dixmude, held by Generals Hély d'Oissel, de Mitry and Humbert with five divisions, two of them Territorial, and three cavalry divisions.<sup>1</sup> Heralded by

<sup>1</sup> Hély d'Oissel's detachment (5th Cavalry Division and two infantry regiments of the IX. Corps); de Mitry's detachment (6th and 7th Cavalry Divisions and the 87th Territorial Division); Humbert's XXXII. Corps (33th and 42nd Divisions and 89th Territorial Division); and the garrison of the Dixmude salient, viz. two battalions of Fusiliers Marins, one Belgian battalion, one Senegalese in the bridgehead east of the river, and the remaining four battalions of Admiral Ronarc'h's brigade and a second Senegalese battalion west of the river. (Ronarc'h, p. 117.)



heavy bombardment, which was opened during the night at 1 A.M. and reached its maximum about 5 A.M., the German infantry left its trenches at 1 P.M. The four French and Belgian battalions in Dixmude, attacked on three sides by twenty battalions of *4th Ersatz* and *43rd Reserve Divisions*, with others in reserve, were about 4 P.M., after hand-to-hand fighting, driven across the river.<sup>1</sup> The Belgians destroyed the bridges over the Yser, and the enemy could not immediately follow: a small detachment that did eventually manage to cross north of the town, had to be quickly withdrawn.

The capture of the Dixmude bridgehead was not the only success of the Germans: they gained ground further south from de Mitry and Humbert. They captured the cross roads north-west of Bixschoote; occupied the Kortekeer Cabaret and some trenches west of Langemarck; and drove the 38th Division across the Yser Canal, and the 42nd Division and de Mitry's cavalry corps back to that waterway,<sup>2</sup> inflicting considerable losses on them. Hély d'Oissel's detachment, however, on the left of the IX. Corps, held its ground.<sup>3</sup>

Such reinforcements as General d'Urbal could put his hand on were at once despatched northward: the 6th Cavalry Division from Zillebeke, the remaining reserves of the XVI. and IX. Corps and a brigade of the 11th Division. He also called on Sir John French to return the two Zouave battalions lent by him and to relieve Conneau's cavalry corps, in support opposite Messines, by British cavalry. These requests were complied with next day, except as regards one of the Zouave battalions actually in the line.

Not only the attack, but the intelligence that came in convinced the French that the decisive German offensive was being directed north of Ypres and against them. By the 10th November it was known for certain that the *III. Reserve Corps*, *4th Ersatz Division* and part of the *XXII. Reserve Corps* had been shifted southwards from the Belgian front, and, as well as part of the *XXIII. Reserve Corps*, were opposite de Mitry and Humbert. It was suspected that the enemy had brought up there several

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", pp. 106-8, claims that the German attackers were "not numerically superior", but admits and shows on a map that two whole divisions were engaged.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 89; Palat, viii. p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> The failure of the attack by the *5th Reserve*, *6th Reserve* and *9th Reserve Divisions* is admitted in "Ypres", p. 110.

fresh corps from the south.<sup>1</sup> All the German formations actually present between the Lys and Ypres had by now been identified by contact except Plettenberg's corps (a Guard division and the *4th Division*) and the *4th Bavarian Division*, which had not yet been in action. Information of Guard units moving up from Arras had been received, but it was confused, owing to the enemy having formed a composite division, instead of sending the *1st* or *2nd Guard Division* as a whole. It was known from a captured order that the *4th Bavarian Division*—which was actually present, though not yet identified, south of the Comines Canal—was near Lille on the 2nd November, and as a soldier of one of its regiments had been captured near Passchendaele, it was erroneously assumed by the French that the whole division was in that region. It was thought that the *4th Division*, which it was known had been withdrawn from the Aisne front, was near Merckem, whereas it was south of Gheluvelt. Thus, as it seemed to confirm these wrong deductions, the attack—exceedingly well delivered—of the *Fourth Army* north-east of Ypres was mistaken for the vital one, and reserves were sent north which should have been kept to support the French troops on the strategically important but very weak front near the Comines Canal and the Zillebeke road.

On the rest of the front, however, from Langemarek southwards, there was nothing to indicate how events were shaping. The German official account<sup>2</sup> claims that the *XXVII.* and *XXVI. Reserve Corps*, opposite the British 2nd Division and French IX. Corps, attacked and took the first line of trenches and were then held up by the wire entanglements of the second. General Dubois' troops, however, lost no ground, and the report of General Monro for the 2nd Division was:—"the situation during the day remained unchanged except for the usual shelling. An attempt of some eight hundred Germans to dig trenches about five hundred yards away was stopped by artillery fire. There was no other incident except that the enemy threw a good many hand-grenades in the 5th Brigade area."

Of the twelve battalions of the 1st Division, three were with Br.-General FitzClarence, two with Lord Cavan, one with Colonel Pereira, and six in reserve near Hooge. The two former groups, and Wing's division of the II. Corps

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 305, says as many as five.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 110.

south of the Menin road, suffered considerably from bombardment. At 11 A.M. the left of Wing's division was shelled as if in preparation for an assault. At 1 P.M. hostile infantry—probably the *4th Division*—was reported to be massing, and the front of the bombardment was extended to cover Wing's right also; but if an attack was intended, it was broken up by accurate artillery fire before it left the woods whence it seemed about to emerge.

Further south, the 2/Grenadier Guards, with Lord Cavan, lost 3 officers and 74 men by enfilade fire, delivered, according to the German account, by "three batteries of heavy howitzers, three batteries of mortars, a battery of 4-inch guns, and a battery of 5.9-inch guns". After this fire it is asserted that both divisions of the *XV. Corps* attacked and "were able to gain some hundreds of yards of ground",<sup>1</sup> but the alleged advance and success are imaginary and failed in any case to dislodge the British, though at night the Grenadiers were withdrawn into corps reserve.

The infantry of the 2nd Division was this day reported to number 137 officers and 6,778 other ranks, that is, nearly two-thirds and one-half, respectively, below establishment. The Irish Guards, who, with the 2/Oxfordshire L.I., now returned to the division, could only form two companies of 148 men each. The other arms were not so weak, the artillery being short only of 18 officers and 203 men. The infantry of the 1st Division on this day—including the London Scottish, about five hundred strong, but excluding the 1/Coldstream, which, two hundred men strong, was with the other two battalions of the regiment under Colonel Pereira in the 2nd Division area—totalled only 3,500 instead of 12,204.

In the French area, about Wytshaete from the right of Cavan's detachment to the left of the 4th Division, "there was no sensible change in the situation".<sup>2</sup> "The troops of the *43rd*, *39th* and *32nd Divisions* attacked without result." Another enemy attack towards St. Eloi was repulsed with the assistance of a brigade of the 11th Division.<sup>3</sup> It was judged possible to take from this area and send northwards certain reserves, as already related. Further south in the British area there was no action of importance. Arrangements were made by General Allenby

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Palat, viii. p. 305.

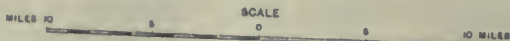
<sup>3</sup> The Germans however claim to have taken "the high ground on which St. Eloi is situated", on this day. "Ypres", p. 95.





# SITUATION 10<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 1914.

SKETCH 16.



N O R T H  
S E A



O.H.Q., D.E.F. of 5<sup>th</sup> BRK (A and O.H.Q. of Railhead)

GERMAN TROOPS... GREEN  
FRENCH TROOPS... BLUE  
BELGIAN TROOPS... BROWN  
BRITISH TROOPS... RED

Alfred Lane on 10<sup>th</sup> October

to take over from Conneau's cavalry; and in the 4th 10 Nov. Division it was decided to desist from further attacks on the group of houses near Le Gheer held by the enemy and organize a new line west of it.<sup>1</sup> Thus the "Bird Cage", as it came to be called, a small projection some three hundred yards square surrounded on three sides by British trenches, remained in German hands, and continued so until the Messines offensive in 1917.

In the extreme north, near the coast, the French 81st Territorial Division attacked Lombartzyde and made a small gain of ground. Efforts made, simultaneously, by the Belgians against St. Georges, Schoorbakke and Tervaete achieved nothing, as the ground available for movement was limited by the inundations.

#### SITUATION ON THE NIGHT OF THE 10TH/11TH NOVEMBER

During the 10th November some minor reliefs took place, so that at night the general situation of the Allied forces from the La Bassée Canal to the sea, and the German forces opposite to them, was as follows:—

(1) Between the La Bassée Canal and the Lys (including reserves; roughly 4 British and Indian divisions against 4½ German):—

<i>Allies.</i>	<i>Germans.</i>
Indian Corps (less a brigade in Egypt)	58th and 84th Brigades (XIV. Corps)
Part of II. Corps attached to Indian Corps (8th and 14th Brigades and 1 battalion of 15th; 3rd Divisional artillery and the howitzer brigade of the 5th Division)	25th, 27th and 79th Brigades (VII. Corps)
H.A.C. Battalion	48th Reserve Division (XXIV. Reserve Corps)
III. Corps; <sup>2</sup>	33rd Landwehr Brigade
(19th Brigade, 6th Division and one-third of the 4th Division)	47th Brigade (XIX. Corps)

<sup>1</sup> From a captured document it was ascertained that the 33rd Landwehr Brigade had arrived to reinforce the XIX. Corps, enabling it to use more troops north of the Lys.

<sup>2</sup> Rouges Banes, east of Laventie, was the junction point of the Indian and III. Corps.



(2) From the Lys to the Comines Canal (including reserves ; roughly 4½ divisions and 5 cavalry divisions against 8 German divisions and 4 cavalry divisions) :—

Two-thirds of 4th Division (with 2 battalions II. Corps and 21st Brigade in reserve)	<i>40th Division (XIX. Corps)</i> 1 regiment of <i>24th Division</i> ( <i>XIX. Corps</i> )
Cavalry Corps (with 2 battalions II. Corps)	<i>Jäger brigade</i> <i>I. Cavalry Corps</i> <i>II. Cavalry Corps</i> <i>11th Landwehr Brigade</i> <i>26th Division</i>
French I. Cavalry Corps <sup>1</sup>	
French 43rd Division (greater part)	<i>3rd Division</i>
French 39th Division (greater part)	<i>25th Reserve Division</i>
French 32nd Division (greater part)	<i>6th Bavarian Reserve Division</i>
French 11th Division (half)	<i>3rd Bavarian Division</i>
Olleris' detachment (8 bat- talions) <sup>2</sup>	<i>4th Bavarian Division</i>

(3) From the Comines Canal to south-west corner of Polygon Wood (nominally 35 battalions against 51) :—

Moussy's detachment (5 bat- talions) <sup>2</sup>	<i>30th Division (13 battalions)</i>
Cavan's detachment 500 men of 3rd Cavalry Division	<i>39th Division (13 battalions)</i>
5 battalions <sup>3</sup>	<i>4th Division (13 battalions)</i>
Wing's Division McCracken's group (1,750 men)	
Gleichen's group (1,600 men)	<i>Guard Division (12 bat- talions)</i>
Shaw's group (2,700 men)	
Zouave battalion	
1st (Guards) Brigade <sup>4</sup> (800 men)	
In reserve :—	
3rd Cavalry Division (less 500 rifles)	
8 battalions (survivors of)	

<sup>1</sup> About to be relieved by the British cavalry corps.

<sup>2</sup> Olleris' and Moussy's detachments were now under General Vidal.

<sup>3</sup> 1/South Wales Borderers, 2/Welch, part of 2/Munster Fusiliers, 2/K.R.R.C. and London Scottish.

<sup>4</sup> This actually consisted of three Scots battalions—1/Scots Guards, 1/Black Watch, 1/Cameron Highlanders.

(4) From south-west corner of Polygon Wood to the sea 10 Nov. (including reserves) :—

2nd Division (7 battalions)	<i>XXVII. Reserve Corps.</i>
French IX. Corps	<i>XXVI. Reserve Corps.</i>
Hély d'Oïssel's detachment	<i>III. Reserve Corps.</i>
De Mitry's detachment	<i>9th Reserve Division.</i>
XXXII. Corps	<i>XXIII. Reserve Corps.</i>
Naval Brigade, etc.	<i>44th Reserve Division.</i>
Belgian Army	<i>XXII. Reserve Corps.</i> ( <i>43rd Reserve and 4th Ersatz Divisions and part of Marine Division.</i> )
81st Territorial Division	<i>Part of Marine Division.</i>

## NOTE

## GERMAN OPERATIONS AND PLANS

During the period 6th to 9th November, as we have seen, the Germans made a series of small attacks all along the line, whilst reinforcements were being brought up, in order to hold the Allies to their ground, and to prevent them from obtaining rest and improving their defences. Map 38. Sketch 14.

According to enemy plans, the decisive attack was to have taken place on the 10th November, "when the new divisions had got into position and another strong reinforcement of engineers would have arrived".<sup>1</sup> It was to be made principally against the front opposite Gheluvelt, from the southern end of Herenthage Wood to the southern end of Polygon Wood—the sector held by the left of Wing's (3rd) Division and the 1st (Guards) Brigade. During the night of the 9th/10th the German *4th Division* and Winekler's *Guard Division*,<sup>2</sup> forming a corps under General Baron von Plettenberg, commander of the *Guard Corps*, had taken over the part of the front of the *XV. Corps* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps* which covered Gheluvelt, these two formations closing outwards to make room for the new comers between them. Plettenberg's *Corps* and the *XV. Corps* south of it, were at the same time organized into an Army Group under General von Linsingen, who thus had a front of four miles athwart the Menin road.

The instructions issued to Linsingen, lately commander of the *II. Corps* of Kluck's *First Army*, were "to drive back and crush the enemy lying north of the Comines Canal; the main weight of the attack to be delivered by the left wing".<sup>3</sup> The *Army Group Fabeck*<sup>4</sup> "is to maintain its position west of the canal [that is,

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> A composite division consisting of the *1st Guard Brigade* from the *1st Guard Division*, and the *4th Guard Brigade* from the *2nd Guard Division*.

<sup>3</sup> It will be seen the left wing made no progress; it was a portion of the right wing which broke in on the 1st (Guards) Brigade.

<sup>4</sup> Next south of Linsingen's, and now containing the *II. Bavarian Corps* and Gerok's *Group*, viz.:—*6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, *25th Reserve Division*, *3rd Division*, *26th Division*, *11th Landwehr Brigade* and *6th Cavalry Division*.

“south], its task being to continue to press forward and at the same time to support the attack of the left wing of *Army Group Linsingen* by as powerful enfilade fire as possible from its right “flank batteries”.<sup>1</sup> All the other divisions of the *Sixth Army*, and the whole of the *Fourth Army*, north of it between Gheluvelt and the sea, were to attack on the 10th November with utmost energy, so as to pin the Allies to the ground and allow them no rest.<sup>2</sup>

In Plettenberg's *Corps*, however, owing to heavy mist preventing the necessary reconnaissances, the preparations for an advance—though the staffs had arrived several days before the troops—had not been sufficiently completed by the morning of the 10th to satisfy its commander. With the concurrence of General von Linsingen, and after arrangement with the neighbouring troops, the offensive was put off until the 11th. The postponement, however, seems to have applied only to divisions of the *Sixth Army*; for the *Fourth Army* acted on the original instructions. At any rate, the greater part of it, the *III. Reserve Corps*, *9th Reserve Division*,<sup>3</sup> the *XXIII. Reserve Corps* with the *44th Reserve Division*, six divisions in all, attacked the French (2 divisions, 2 Territorial divisions, and 3 cavalry divisions) on the front from Langemark to Dixmude (exclusive).

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> “Ypres”, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> “Ypres”, p. 109. It had just come from the Verdun area.



## CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLES OF YPRES. THE BATTLE OF NONNE BOSSCHEN

11TH NOVEMBER 1914

THE GREAT GERMAN ATTACK ON THE FRONT FROM  
MESSINES TO POLYGON WOOD

HERENTHAGE—VELDHOEK WOODS—NONNE BOSSCHEN—  
POLYGON WOOD <sup>1</sup>

(Maps 2, 38, 39 ; Sketches A, 14, 16)

### THE PRELIMINARIES

THE night of the 10th/11th November passed quietly, and no incident occurred which might foreshadow that anything unusual was about to happen. The relief of the troops of the German *XV. Corps* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps* near the Menin road by the *4th Division* and Winckler's *Division* had, it is now known, been carried out during the previous night,<sup>2</sup> and in view of the bombardment that was about to take place, most of the German infantry had been withdrawn from the front trenches. Thus the front was unusually quiet. British aviators had reported movements of artillery during the 10th, which went to show that more guns were being brought up ; but no one, of course, could deduce from this information that fresh divisions had been interpolated in the line, and that preparations for a supreme effort against the British were in progress. The French, as we have seen, had definitely concluded that the blow would fall upon them, further north.

Maps 38,  
39.  
Sketch  
14.

<sup>1</sup> The name given to the fighting on this day in "The Official Names of the Battles" is the "Battle of Nonne Bosschen" (Nun's Copse). This wood, it will be seen from the narrative, was on the northern edge of the great attack.

<sup>2</sup> "1st Foot Guard Regt.", p. 48.

It has sometimes been represented that the Prussian Guard, of which only one composite division was present, was alone entrusted with the honour of breaking through the British, a task which had hitherto proved too formidable for the infantry of the line. No doubt this legend met with credence from the fact that, whilst the attacks of all other units and formations completely failed, two Prussian Guard regiments did cross the British defences at a weak place and penetrate, for a short time, a thousand yards into the I. Corps position; and another Guard regiment took a short length of the Royal Fusiliers' front trenches. Yet it has been seen from the instructions quoted in the last chapter<sup>1</sup> that the Guard was not singled out for a special and solitary effort. The orders of Crown Prince Rupprecht enjoined that the decisive attack on the 11th was to be made by Fabeck's and Linsingen's *Army Groups*, and "the left wing of the *Fourth Army*"—the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*. The *54th Reserve Division* of this corps was to work in close co-operation with the Guard in the attack against Polygon Wood.<sup>2</sup> This made a total of twelve and a half divisions on the nine-mile front, from Messines to Reutel, opposite to Polygon Wood. The remainder of the *Fourth* and *Sixth Armies* between the La Bassée Canal and the sea were to co-operate.

It was only on the front of the newly arrived *4th* and *Guard Divisions*, near the Menin road, that the attack proved dangerous, and then quite as much from the number as from the quality of the troops. It should be noticed, however, that the *4th Division*—with its sister, the *3rd*, of the *II. Corps*—composed of Pomeranians and West Prussians, was regarded in the old Prussian Army as one of the very best fighting formations; superior, indeed, in training to the *Guard Corps*; for in spite of new regulations this prided itself on its adherence to the methods of 1870-1.

The morning was grey and foggy: mist hung about all the forenoon, and a light wind carried it with the smoke of battle towards the enemy. About noon a high wind rose and blew the mist entirely away, and was followed soon by rain, which towards 6 P.M. turned into a heavy downpour.<sup>3</sup> As soon as there was any light, a little after 6.30 A.M., the German guns, reinforced since the previous

<sup>1</sup> See p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", pp. 111, 112, 115.

<sup>3</sup> The repeated statements in "Ypres" of pouring rain in the morning and a rainstorm beating in the faces of the attackers, are not borne out by the British records, which all agree that the rain came much later, and was not serious until after dark.

day, opened the most terrific fire that the British had yet experienced; and it increased in intensity as 9 A.M. approached.<sup>1</sup> The very volume of the storm of shells was sufficient warning to the British commanders, now well versed in the enemy's ways, that a serious effort was on foot. The small strong points behind the line were manned, and the artillery and the meagre reserves stood ready. For the infantry in the front line and the fighting staffs there was nothing to do but lie at the bottom of the trenches and in the holes in the ground, which, when they had a few planks, a door, or some branches, and a few inches of earth over them, were in those days called "dug-outs". The British battalions had now been fighting continuously for three weeks, practically without relief or rest, under all the hardships of wet and cold in the open, and to many of the infantry it seemed that the end was now at hand. Without losing heart or faith in the final victory, they had ceased to feel that their lives were any longer their own. The uppermost thought was to be ready to shoot down the enemy when the nerve-racking bombardment should cease and the infantry come on.

The heaviest shelling seems to have fallen on McCracken's and Shaw's groups of Wing's division of the II. Corps, and FitzClarence's brigade of the I. Corps, from which some of the men were sent to shelter inside the woods near by. The edges of all the woods near the front line had received such attention from the hostile guns that they presented an obstacle of stumps of trees, chequered with shell craters and fallen timber and branches, so formidable that no troops could possibly surmount it under close fire. This proved an unexpected assistance to the British when, later on, the Germans sought to press forward.

Few British saw the first German advance, for mist prevented distant observation, and even the trustiest infantry look-out men and most determined artillery observers were forced at times to keep their heads down; and the bombardment was continued until the enemy was almost on them. Fortunately for the Allies, in spite of the stringent orders to attack with the utmost energy, only a proportion of the German infantry on the nine-mile

<sup>1</sup> The German orders were for the artillery to open fire at 6.30 A.M. and attain greatest violence between 8 and 9 A.M., assault to be made at 9 A.M. ("1st Foot Guard Regiment", p. 40). The bombardments of 1914 were not of the severity experienced in later years; but, on the other hand, there was practically no cover in the trenches and absolutely no shell-proof cover.



front seems to have been in a condition to respond. When we pass from right to left of the front selected by the Supreme Command for the final assault, the incidence of this first considerable failure of the enemy to close regardless of losses will be found significant—it was really only the fresh troops that answered the call for a final effort.

### THE ALLIED RIGHT

#### CONNEAU'S CAVALRY, XVI. CORPS, VIDAL'S DETACHMENT, CAVAN'S FORCE

Map 39.  
Sketch  
14.

Near Messines the *26th Division* and *11th Landwehr Brigade*, the old opponents of the Cavalry Corps, should have advanced. But to quote the enemy account, "the line remained almost unaltered during the 11th November. "The very severe effect on this front of the enemy's "artillery fire from Mount Kemmel [that of the French and "British Cavalry Corps and the 5th Division, massed under "Br.-General Headlam], and the enfilade fire of artillery "and machine guns [of the 4th Division] from Ploegsteert "Wood, compelled our men to remain in their trenches." There was so little of an attack that the relief of Conneau's cavalry by the British cavalry corps was completed, and General Allenby formally took over command at noon. There is nothing to chronicle, except the new distribution of the front. Having at his disposal a French infantry regiment, the 156th, and four battalions of British infantry,<sup>1</sup> General Allenby held the three-mile front opposite Messines—from near Ploegsteert Wood to west of Kruisstraat cross roads, in front of Spanbroekmolen—with the Yorkshire L.I. and part of the French infantry, and kept the rest, three British battalions and his two cavalry divisions, in support and reserve. No German attack developing, towards midnight—in accordance with G.H.Q. orders received at 9.15 P.M.—General Allenby sent off the 1st Cavalry Division in inky darkness and heavy driving rain to reinforce the I. Corps at Ypres.

Between the left of Allenby and the Comines Canal, where stood the greater part of three French divisions and

<sup>1</sup> The 2/K.O.Y.L.I. and 1/West Kent of the 13th Brigade, and after 11 A.M. the 2/West Yorks. and 2/Devons. of the 23rd Infantry Brigade of the 8th Division, the infantry of which had just arrived in France. They were brigaded under Colonel G. F. Phillips (West Yorks.) and the 13th Brigade staff, Colonel Martyn, commanding that brigade, having just been wounded.

about half of two others, five German divisions—the *3rd*, *25th Reserve*, *6th Bavarian Reserve*, *3rd Bavarian* and *4th Bavarian*—attacked in vain. Their official account claims “slow but sure progress” and mentions a number of minor incidents, among them the capture of a “battery of four machine guns”.<sup>1</sup> There was, in fact, considerable firing, but no change in the situation. 11 Nov.

North of the canal, Moussy's detachment, now under General Vidal and weakened by the despatch on the previous day of three battalions of the 68th and 268th Regiments to reinforce de Mitry near Langemark, nevertheless held its own until about noon. Then the left of the German *30th Division* forced it back to Hill 60 and the outskirts of Verbrandenmolen, perilously near to Ypres. General Vidal, having now no reserve, despatched appeals for help to the French IX. and XVI. Corps and to General Haig. Lord Cavan had already informed the British commander that, under heavy shell fire, the French were leaving their trenches, and had appealed to him for assistance which he was totally unable to afford. By this hour, in consequence of fighting on the Gheluvelt front, not only the divisional but most of the corps reserve of General Haig's command had been engaged or had been set in motion; and the situation was throughout the day verging on the critical. All that Sir D. Haig could do was to impress on Br.-General Harper, of the Operations Section of G.H.Q., who was with him at the moment, that he must at once bring to the notice of Sir John French that the retirement of Vidal's troops was endangering the whole line at a vital strategic point. The French commanders near were equally at a loss to find reinforcements: they were all deeply engaged; but the ever-willing General Dubois decided to send all that he had in hand. It was but one cavalry regiment, the 7th Hussars then at St. Jean, but it sufficed to turn the scale. Leaving their horses at Zillebeke, the hussars made a counter-attack which carried Moussy's infantry with it,<sup>2</sup> and by 6.30 p.m. his line was re-established along the road from Spoil Bank Bridge (between Voormezele and Verbrandenmolen) to Verbrandenmolen and thence to Zwarteleen; but it was still only 3,000 yards from Ypres.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, p. 120. See also its map of the attack of 11th November.

<sup>2</sup> See the interesting account in Dubois, ii. pp. 94-5.

<sup>3</sup> The German account (“Ypres”, p. 119) claims that Hill 60 was taken, but this, according to General Dubois, ii. p. 95, and British eye-

Whilst Moussy had thus been struggling to hold his own, Lord Cavan's detachment, on his left, had been experiencing a very rough time. This force now consisted of some five hundred rifles (Royals and 10th Hussars) of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, the 2/K.R.R.C., 1/South Wales Borderers, 2/Welch, the greater part of the 2/Munster Fusiliers, and the London Scottish, supported by the 7th Divisional artillery, with nothing of Lord Cavan's own 4th (Guards) Brigade except the staff and the signal section. Heavily shelled, like the rest of the line, from 6.30 A.M. onwards, the troops also suffered from a constant rain of rifle bullets, mostly, however, directed over their heads. There were characteristic complaints from regimental officers that the fire interfered with the bringing up of ammunition and rations, and with rest and feeding; but, well assisted by the artillery, Cavan's detachment held its own without losing a trench. The Germans—mainly the *39th Division*, with parts of the *30th* and *4th Divisions* on its flanks—whose front trenches were barely a hundred yards away, poured out of the woods behind them in vain. They advanced in particularly large numbers across a clearing in front of the right half battalion of the London Scottish, who were fighting in two portions with the 2/Welch and 2/Munster Fusiliers interposed between them. The right flank of this half battalion was enveloped, and for a moment the situation seemed dangerous; but it was at once restored by a counter-attack against the exposed German left (south) flank by a few men of the 2/K.R.R.C., the battalion next on the right. A little later the pressure on the left half battalion of the London Scottish grew serious; but this, in its turn, was relieved by Colonel Malcolm sending what remained of his battalion headquarters into the firing line. Lord Cavan now called up the 3rd Dragoon Guards, the last regiment of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, to support the London Scottish. The condition of affairs however improved so greatly after the second German repulse that there was no occasion to employ the cavalrymen, and they were sent back to their bivouacs. Towards evening the *39th Division* tried to close by making small attacks at various points, and harassed the line with rifle fire at close range; but when it came to exchange of bullets the sole result was that

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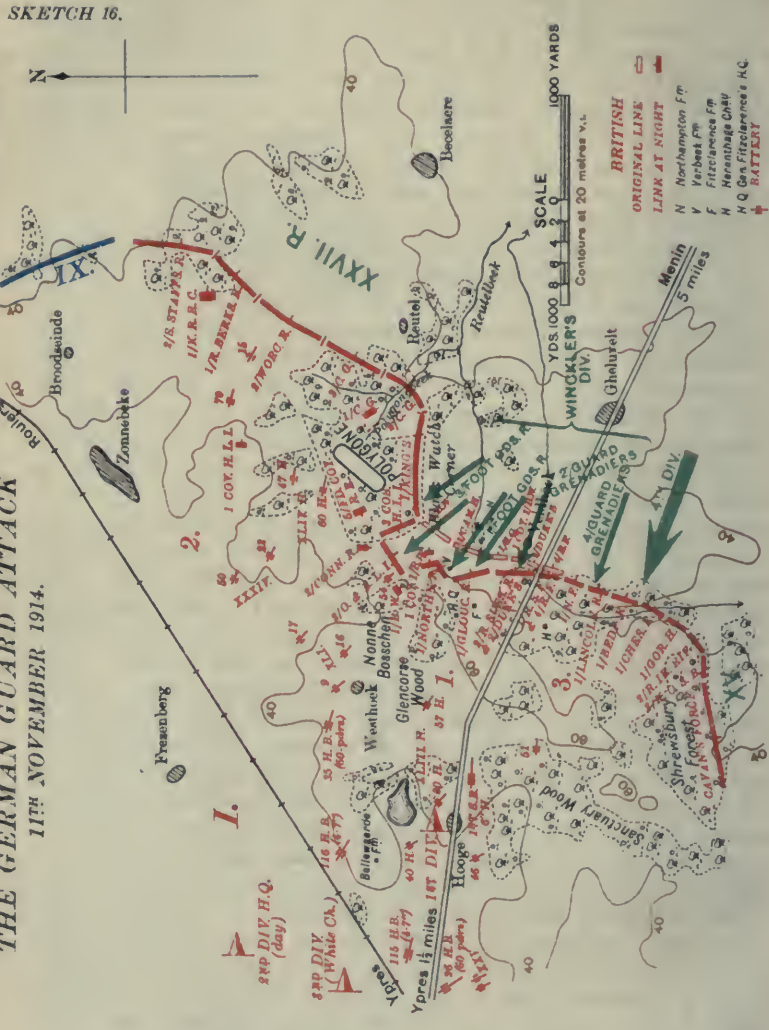
witnesses, does not seem to have been the case. The hill was, however, in possession of the enemy when the British took over the sector from the French on 1st/2nd February 1915.





SKETCH 16.

# THE GERMAN GUARD ATTACK 11TH NOVEMBER 1914.



**BRITISH**  
 ORIGINAL LINE  
 LINE AT NIGHT  
 L N N Northampton Fm  
 V V Verbank Fm  
 F F Fitzclarene Fm  
 H H Merenthage Chav  
 H Q Qn Fitzclarene & AC  
 BATTERY

SCALE  
 YDS. 1000 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0  
 Contours at 20 metres v.l.  
 1000 YARDS

Ordnance Survey, 1924

the Germans suffered very heavy losses, and made no impression whatever.

In Cavan's sector, therefore, though the odds were at least twelve (possibly more) battalions against six<sup>1</sup>—counting the five hundred cavalrymen as a battalion—the Germans completely failed. They do not claim a success, and the official account passes in silence from the French at Zwarteleen to the Herenthage woods held by Wing's division.<sup>2</sup>

### THE ALLIED CENTRE

#### WING'S DIVISION OF THE II. CORPS, 1ST (GUARDS) BRIGADE AND 1/KING'S

It was on the British centre that the fiercest German attack fell. This sector of the line started from the Lower Star Post in the centre of Shrewsbury Forest, and ran over the open ground between this wood and the copses surrounding Herenthage Chateau; through these and across the Menin road. It continued past the eastern side of the woods around Veldhoek Chateau, and then across the open in front of Glencorse Wood and the Nonne Bosschen, a space which is divided into two by the Reutelbeek—a small stream, little better than a ditch, but muddy and difficult to cross—to the south-western corner of Polygon Wood. This area is overlooked by higher ground at Zandvoorde and Gheluvelt and by Reutel spur. The right and centre portions, about three thousand five hundred yards in length, were held by the three groups of Wing's division of the II. Corps. On the right was McCracken's group (50 officers and 1,714 men), with the 2/K.O.S.B.,<sup>3</sup> 2/Royal Irish Rifles and 1/Gordon Highlanders in front and the 1/S. Lancashire and 1/Wiltshire in reserve; Gleichen's (50 officers and 1,550 men), with the 1/Cheshire and 2/Bedfordshire forming front line and supports; <sup>4</sup> and

Map 39.  
Sketches  
A, 16.

<sup>1</sup> All the 39th Division and possibly parts of the 30th and 4th. Exactly what portion of the XV. Corps moved against the British and what against the French is not yet known. It is only established that three German divisions, 30th, 39th and 4th, the last a fresh one (37 battalions in all), moved against Moussy, Cavan and McCracken, who had 5, 6 and 5 battalions, respectively—total 16, of which all except the 2/Munster Fusiliers were very weak. The odds in battalions were 2:3 to 1, in men probably 5 or more to 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> This battalion had reached Ypres from Neuve Eglise on the night of 6th November.

<sup>4</sup> The battalions of Gleichen's group had been in divisional reserve, but during the night of the 10th/11th they had been sent up to relieve the 1/Northamptonshire and 1/Loyal North Lancashire.



Shaw's (76 officers and 2,638 men), with the 1/Lincolnshire, 1/Northumberland Fusiliers and 4/Royal Fusiliers and a Zouave company<sup>1</sup> in front, carrying the line up to the Menin road, with the 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers (who had rejoined from the Lahore Division on the 10th) in brigade reserve. North of the Menin road, and also under Br.-General Shaw, covering the woods round Veldhoek Chateau, came the 2/Duke of Wellington's (20 officers and 826 men). The remaining space, of some nine hundred yards, towards Polygon Wood, where the 2nd Division took up the line, was held by FitzClarence's brigade, called the 1st (Guards) Brigade but actually consisting of three weak Scots battalions, the 1/Scots Guards, 1/Cameron Highlanders and 1/Black Watch, in all rather less in strength than a single battalion and little more than eight hundred of all ranks.

The line immediately north of the Menin road formed a re-entrant, first breaking back, then running parallel to the front and then forward again in two steps, which served to flank it. It was also partly flanked from Polygon Wood, but the depression in which the Reutelbeek runs was dead ground from that direction. In addition to a few isolated support trenches behind the front of the 1st Brigade, there were five so-called strong points, closed works with a few strands of barbed wire round them. These comprised a formal redoubt, built by the French 32nd Regiment some days before, on the edge of Veldhoek woods north of the chateau; one near the chateau itself; another east of the chateau near the edge of the wood; one at Northampton Farm (the next farm east of FitzClarence's Farm);<sup>2</sup> and a fifth in the gardens of a cottage about three hundred yards south-west of the south-western corner of Polygon Wood, henceforward known as "Black Watch corner". All the brigade and battalion headquarters were also prepared for defence.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Douglas Haig had been roused at 3 A.M. by an urgent message to return to the French the two Zouave battalions. He sent the 11th Battalion, but retained the 4th. See p. 412.

<sup>2</sup> Br.-General FitzClarence's headquarters were never in this farm. The mistake in name was due to a slight shift of the word in preparing the British map for reproduction in the winter of 1914. His headquarters were first in an unfinished house near the origin of the Reutelbeek, and, on the 11th, in a farm on the edge of Glencorse Wood where the track from the south enters it.

<sup>3</sup> These strong points according to a senior staff officer (not an engineer) who rode all over the field during the fighting, "were the saving of the day. The attackers blundered on them after they had broken through our line, and were taken in enfilade and broken up and driven into woods

The British reserves were very small, less than 2,000 11 Nov. rifles in all.<sup>1</sup> In 1st Division reserve around Hooze were the 2nd Brigade :—the 1/Northamptonshire, 1/Loyal North Lancashire and 2/Royal Sussex; and, in the course of the day, an engineer battalion 350 strong made up of the 17th, 56th and 59th Field Companies under Lieut.-Colonel C. S. Wilson. In the 2nd Division reserve was only the 2/Oxfordshire; whilst in corps reserve were the 2/Grenadiers, 1/Queen's, 1/Gloucestershire, and the Irish Guards with all the 7th Cavalry Brigade and one regiment of the 6th.

When at 9 A.M. after two and a half hours' bombardment, the German artillery lifted its fire,<sup>2</sup> twenty-five battalions of the most famous regiments of the Prussian Army—at least 17,500 infantry—moved forward on either side of the Menin road, from the shelter of the woods facing the British centre. Opposed to them, counting all the reserve, were nineteen battalions and three cavalry regiments, totalling no more than 7,850.

Until the Germans actually crossed their own front trenches and were close to the British, few seem to have seen them, but everywhere the artillery and, nearly everywhere, the infantry were instantly ready to meet them.

#### THE ATTACK ON THE RIGHT, AND CENTRE OF WING'S DIVISION AT HERENTHAGE

The Pomeranians and West Prussians of the 4th *Division*, who attacked against McCracken's and Gleichen's groups, and perhaps overlapped half of the London Scottish on Lord Cavan's left—twelve battalions against eight and a half, including reserves—were immediately broken by the steady fire of the battalions of the II. Corps and were never dangerous. All their own official account has to say about the contest is that "great difficulties were

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"and hollows for shelter. They were a lesson in defensive tactics for "all time." Domprediger Baumann, Chaplain of the 4th *Guard Division* (see his "Mit der Garde im Westen") says "there were heavy losses especially in the battalions and companies who charged unhindered "through woods and houses and then got fire from all sides".

<sup>1</sup> For strength of battalions see p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> It was during the German bombardment on this morning that an incident occurred made famous in the pages of "Punch". Count Gleichen's brigade major appeared in the general's room in Beukenhorst Chateau (Stirling Castle, just south of Clapham Junction) clad in a towel, with his clothes on his arm, saying, "May I finish my dressing here. They're shelling the bath-room."

“encountered. Deep trenches, broad obstacles [formed “entirely by their own artillery fire] and enfilade machine-gun fire combined to make progress slow, especially on “the right wing.”<sup>1</sup> There was, in fact, no progress whatever. Advancing slowly, after the first staggering blow of a minute’s British rapid fire, in what appeared to be many lines, with their rifles at the secure under their arms, “without enthusiasm and in a sort of dazed way as if “they were drugged”—as it was reported by one British battalion—the Prussians, scourged by the shrapnel of the 1st Divisional artillery, broken and rebroken by rifle fire, fell back to shelter again. Though from time to time large numbers were reported to be reassembling, such attempts at renewal of the first advance were invariably checked at once, mainly by artillery fire. Nothing daunted by terrific losses—prisoners stated that their companies had been reduced to below a quarter of their establishment—a final effort was made by the Prussian *4th Division* at 4 P.M., but not a German approached anywhere near the British trenches. The battalions of McCracken and Gleichen, judging by their diaries, hardly considered themselves seriously engaged on this day of completely successful defence, and the Wiltshire on the left were able to give some assistance by fire to Shaw’s group, further north. At 9 P.M. all was quiet on the right and centre of Wing’s division.

Except, therefore, for a slight success against Moussy’s detachment, which was not exploited, the great German attack of nine and a half divisions between Messines and the vicinity of the Menin road had completely collapsed. There remains only to narrate the attack of the *Guard Division* against Shaw’s and FitzClarence’s groups, an attack of twelve fresh battalions against eleven weak ones, probably about ten thousand infantry against four thousand. Of the four Guard regiments,<sup>2</sup> two (the *4th Guard Brigade*) attacked Shaw’s 3,500, whilst the remaining two (the *1st Guard Brigade*) had but FitzClarence’s eight hundred Scots before them.

#### THE ATTACK ON SHAW’S BRIGADE, ASTRIDE THE MENIN ROAD

The *4th Guard Brigade* advanced astride the Menin road, the front of its left hand unit, the *4th Guard Grenadier*

<sup>1</sup> “Ypres”, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Each of three battalions.



*Regiment*, extending from the centre of Shaw's right 11 Nov. battalion, the 1/Lincolnshire, to the road, whilst the 2nd *Guard Grenadier Regiment*<sup>1</sup> moved north of it against the 2/Duke of Wellington's in the woods around Veldhoek Chateau. The attack, though expected, came at last, as elsewhere, with very little warning. In the early morning, part of the 4/Royal Fusiliers nearest the Menin road<sup>2</sup> had been driven out of its trenches by shell fire; but, nevertheless, this battalion and all the others of Shaw's group south of the road, which were fairly well concealed in the Herenthage woods and ably supported by part of the 1st Divisional artillery, had no difficulty in beating off the first onslaught by fire and taking heavy toll. Indeed, the German account says the 4th *Guard Grenadier Regiment* "at once suffered such heavy losses that the first two "attacks made no headway". Unfortunately, the advance of the 2nd *Guard Grenadier Regiment* into the re-entrant of the British front north of the road exposed the left flank of the Royal Fusiliers, and under heavy frontal and enfilade fire the battalion—after losing its commander, Br.-General N. R. McMahon,<sup>3</sup>—fell back, followed shortly after by the Zouave company. Br.-General Shaw immediately sent up the 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers, with a company of the 2/Royal Sussex, under Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Smith. Two of its companies, using rifle and bayonet, caught in flank the companies of the 4th *Guard Grenadier Regiment*, which, after reaching the Royal Fusiliers' trenches nearest the road, had turned southwards into the Herenthage woods, no doubt with the purpose of rolling up the line. The Scots Fusiliers drove out the Guard, inflicting heavy loss, although as they went forward, they could see other Germans north of the road moving parallel to them, but in the contrary direction.<sup>4</sup> Towards

<sup>1</sup> The 2nd *Guard Grenadier Regiment* had the *Fusilier Battalion* in first line, the *I.* in the second line and the *II.* in reserve. "2nd *Guard Grenadier Regiment*", p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> A company of the 4th Zouave Battalion was immediately south of the road. The other three companies were near Veldhoek Chateau, in reserve.

<sup>3</sup> He had been appointed to the command of the 10th Brigade but was still with his old battalion.

<sup>4</sup> The German account of this incident ("Ypres", pp. 117-8) varies slightly from the British, but admits the repulse. "When, however, part "of the regiment [4th] near the main road pushed forward along it, "echeloned behind its sister regiment on the right [north] and then "turned southward, the advance made good progress, and a firm footing "was gained in the Herenthage Wood south of the road. The reverse "met with by the 2nd *Guard Grenadiers* unfortunately enabled the British

noon Br.-General Shaw was wounded, and his command was taken over by Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Smith.

The news of the break in the line near the road travelled back fast, and Sir D. Haig at once sent up the remaining three companies of the 2/Royal Sussex from corps reserve to the west end of the Herenthage woods, and Major-General Wing ordered one company of the 1/Wiltshire from McCracken's group to support Shaw; but it was not necessary to employ these reinforcements. It was reported that the whole of the Royal Fusiliers' trenches had been recovered and this continued to be the general belief all the morning. But it proved later that such was not the case, and that the trenches reached by the Royal Scots Fusiliers were the support line, about two hundred yards short of the front line. As the rest of Shaw's front south of the road, occupied by the Lincolnshire and Northumberland Fusiliers, had been maintained intact, attempts were made about 4 P.M. to regain the lost trenches—frontally by the Royal Fusiliers and Royal Scots Fusiliers and from a flank by the Northumberland Fusiliers—but without success.

The casualties in the close fighting in the Herenthage woods were considerable; in addition to their colonel, the Royal Fusiliers lost all their officers except two subalterns, and had only a hundred other ranks left. Except, however, for a momentary success and the occupation of one piece of trench, the Germans had gained nothing. The dead and wounded left behind showed how severely they had suffered, and they displayed no inclination for further combat.

Next to Shaw's group, north of the road, came the 2/Duke of Wellington's (13th Brigade, II. Corps) which had taken over part of the 1st (Guards) Brigade front during the night. It had three companies in the front trenches, and one in reserve, and its line was about three hundred yards nearer Ypres than that of the Royal Fusiliers on its right. Although the ditch by the roadside, connecting the two battalions, had been converted into a communication trench, it does not appear to have been manned for flanking purposes, except that there was a post with two machine guns at its eastern end. During the heavy bombardment

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"to bring such a heavy enfilade fire to bear on the 4th Guard Grenadiers "that the advance had to be stopped." The sketch map illustrating the action differs, however, from the text and shows, correctly, the British counter-attack.

For the 2nd Guard Grenadier regimental account see footnote opposite.

between 6.30 and 9 A.M. as many men as possible were withdrawn from the front line, so that when the enemy artillery fire suddenly lifted, the *Fusilier Battalion* of the *2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment* was able to reach and cross the trenches, which were protected only by a trip wire, before there was time to man them. Pushing on quickly, the Germans advanced some five hundred yards into the Veldhoek woods—which consisted of small oaks and chestnuts, with many rhododendron bushes in the chateau grounds—until they reached the chateau itself, held by a Zouave company, and the strong point near the stables north of it. But this was the limit of the success of the *2nd Guard Grenadiers*, though, as we have seen, it enabled the *4th Guard Grenadiers*, south of the Menin road, to advance, for it made it possible to enfilade the Royal Fusiliers. The enemy was soon brought to a standstill by fire from the rear defences, whilst the 1st Divisional artillery prevented reinforcements from coming on; and in the course of a long struggle the *Fusilier Battalion* gradually became a disorganized crowd and finally was practically annihilated. A charge by the reserve company of the Duke's drove the survivors out of the wood. Possibly the original trenches in the open beyond might have been recovered; but at the moment the Duke of Wellington's had no support on either flank, and further advance was wisely stopped and the men ordered to dig in.<sup>1</sup> This

11 Nov.

<sup>1</sup> The record of the encounter in the history of the *2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment* (p. 21) is short, but is sufficient testimony to the stoutness of the defence of the 2/Duke of Wellington's after its heavy bombardment. Translated it runs :—

“The artillery preparation continued during the early hours of the morning and the assault followed at 9 A.M. The *Fusilier Battalion* [the three battalions of the *Guard Regiments*, and some others, were distinguished as Fusilier, I. and II.] overran the enemy's front position without difficulty and penetrated into the wood. As, however, the troops on either flank were not abreast of it, it was surrounded on all sides in the thick undergrowth, and suffered heavy losses. Attempts made by the *I. Battalion* to relieve it did not succeed in passing the enemy's front trench [it was stopped by artillery fire]. In the afternoon the *Fusilier Battalion* had to be regarded as lost. The *I. Battalion* held the captured position.” *II.* was in brigade reserve and detailed to fill a gap (see p. 434). The losses of the *Fusilier Battalion* are subsequently given as 15 officers and “about 500 other ranks”. “*Ypres*”, pp. 115-7, gives other details, and is interesting to compare with the regimental account. It says: “The defence works inside the wood were quickly taken one after another, but more strong points, protected by wire entanglements untouched by our bombardment, were encountered . . . the battalion had to retire a short distance to reorganize . . . a British counter-attack was launched; but our men, disorganized and mixed up as they were, held fast to the ground and stopped the attack”.



British line battalion which stopped and wiped out a Prussian Guard battalion in single combat lost 7 out of 20 officers and 380 out of 826 men.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GERMAN *1ST GUARD BRIGADE*  
AGAINST FITZCLARENCE'S BRIGADE. THE RESISTANCE  
OF THE STRONG POINTS AND OF THE 1/KING'S

Maps 2,  
39.  
Sketch  
16.

Thus on the right and right centre, the battle had gone well for the Allies. Sir D. Haig had only used a battalion and a cavalry regiment from his reserve, and had no cause for special anxiety, except as regards the retirement of Moussy's detachment near the canal. But, as on several other days of the long-drawn struggle at Ypres, there was to be one small portion of the British line where the enemy should penetrate, owing to the small numbers available to meet him, and for a short time cause local anxiety, although this never assumed the proportions of the crisis brought about by the loss of Gheluvelt on the 31st October.

On the front of the three Scots battalions now forming the 1st (Guards) Brigade under Br.-General FitzClarence, the German bombardment, owing to facility of observation, seems to have been heavier and more effective than elsewhere. Except for a few small farms, orchards and hedges, the ground was open and completely exposed to observation from Reutel ridge which was thirty feet or more higher. The telephone cables to the artillery observers in and near the front line were so repeatedly cut as to be useless, and some of these officers, realizing, as time went on and the shelling gradually increased, that a great attack was about to be delivered, went back to warn their batteries. The trenches affording very little cover, only a few men were in the front line, the greater part having been withdrawn to the support trenches, or to any shelter the ground afforded. All the Scots Guards, only some two hundred in number, were kept close up to the front, a few manning the strong point at Northampton Farm. The Camerons, owing to a shortage of officers, were organized as two "half battalions" each about a hundred and sixty strong; their supports were only a few yards behind the front line, and about a quarter of the strength was in reserve. The Black Watch had a company and a half allotted to the front line, and a similar number in reserve at Verbeek Farm—the combined battalion head-

quarters of the Black Watch and the Camerons—the fourth 11 Nov. company, forty rifles strong, being in the Black Watch strong point near the south-west corner of Polygon Wood.

The 1/King's of the 6th Brigade with 6 officers and 450 other ranks, on the left of the 1st Brigade, held about a mile of front, without any supports or reserve. The battalion was extended along the south face of Polygon Wood as far as the Polygonebeek—a small stream which runs from the race track in the wood towards Poezelhoek—where the line was taken up by the Coldstream. Thus the front of the King's was very nearly at right angles to that of the 1st Brigade and formed a flank which proved an important factor in the coming battle. The men were in a series of holes, each for one or two men, about five to ten yards apart; but a couple of days before, a continuous trench, about ten to fifteen yards inside the wood, had been dug, to which by degrees the holes had been connected by their occupants. Fortunately the German bombardment was directed not on the front line, but behind it where the supports, if there had been any, would have been waiting, and it did no more harm than cause battalion headquarters to move.

It must be emphasized that owing to the shelling and the mud, the supply of rations, water and ammunition to the front line in the 1st Brigade and Polygon Wood sectors had been exceedingly difficult. Alongside the narrow pavé of the few paved roads there was mud knee-deep; and the tracks in the woods were worse, although every night was spent by part of the engineers in the endeavour to corduroy them. The chief means of sustenance had been rum and biscuits; hot meals and hot drinks were out of the question, and washing and sanitary facilities impossible. Apart from the nervous exhaustion resulting from being shot at almost continuously for three weeks, and seeing their comrades fall, the health of the troops was beginning to suffer. And now these sorely tried men were to be attacked by picked troops of the German Army, brought from a quiet front.

Shortly before 9 A.M. a German aeroplane flew low over the 1st Brigade and a little later a thick line of Germans was seen in the haze only fifty yards from the front trenches, advancing silently—some say at a jog-trot,<sup>1</sup> others at a

<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by the regimental history of the *1st Foot Guard Regiment*, p. 50. The order was to "double". Most British reports say that the pace was a walk, and it evidently soon degenerated into this.

walk—the officers with drawn swords and men with rifles at the port. They crossed the first trenches without firing—just as the *2nd Guard Grenadiers* did almost simultaneously against the 2/Duke of Wellington's further south—and attacked the few defenders with the bayonet. The greatest weight of the assault came in the centre, and, although the line was overwhelmed, such a stout resistance was put up by the Scots Guards, Camerons and Black Watch that the German Guard almost immediately began to lose cohesion.<sup>1</sup>

To the British the formation of the enemy now appeared in the mist to be a mass of columns, but was actually a number of lines following close on one another, with gaps in the front owing to it opening out to pass ruins of houses and other obstacles. Early information brought back by artillery observers enabled the batteries to begin and keep up such a barrage, regardless of the limitation of ammunition, that few reinforcements ever reached the first lines of Germans who crossed the British front line. One German regimental history,<sup>2</sup> indeed, attributes the "failure of the assault" to the British guns. "There was insufficient knowledge", it adds, "of the position of the hostile batteries, whose fire could not, therefore, be kept down during the attack."

The two regiments of the *1st Guard Brigade*—the *3rd Foot Guard Regiment* on the right (north) and the *1st Foot Guard Regiment* on the left—six battalions in all, had orders to advance north-westwards into the gap between Polygon Wood and the Veldhoek woods, the dividing line between the regiments being marked by the south-west corner of the Nonne Bosschen. As the *4th Guard Brigade*, which attacked Shaw's group and the 2/Duke of Wellington's near the Menin road, had orders to advance nearly due west, a gap was bound to occur between the two brigades as they went forward. Into this gap, as it formed, a battalion of the brigade reserve, *Battalion II.* of the *2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment*, was to be inserted, but the British artillery barrage prevented this manœuvre from being carried out. Nor was the original north-west direction of the right brigade maintained; the whole of the *1st Foot Guard Regiment*, instead

<sup>1</sup> Domprediger Baumann, Chaplain of the *4th Guard Division* who was present remarks:—"Our brothers are cold-blooded and tough and defend themselves even when their trenches are taken, quite different to the "French".

<sup>2</sup> "1st Foot Guard Regiment", p. 49.



of keeping to south of the Nonne Bosschen, drifted first 11 Nov. towards Verbeek Farm and then into the wood itself, in the hope no doubt of obtaining some shelter from the astonishing effects of British fire.

The greater part of the *3rd Foot Guard Regiment*, harassed by the fire of the 1/King's from Polygon Wood on its right flank, turned off in that direction to deal with its assailants. On the right of the *Guard*, the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, which was to have co-operated by attacking against Polygon Wood, contributed nothing but a little rifle fire—according to unanimous British accounts, although it may have taken part in an abortive advance two hours earlier against the 1/King's. The Coldstream battalions further north, protected by abattis of fallen trees and a little wire, were certainly not attacked.

A gap of some half a mile gradually formed in the front of the *Guard Division*, and no troops appeared to fill it.<sup>1</sup> In fact, as the history of the *1st Foot Guard Regiment* points out, the orders to attack in divergent instead of convergent directions bore in themselves the germ of failure. Still, with their superiority in numbers, the Germans could afford to make mistakes, and if there was a self-made gap in the German line, there was an enemy-made one of nearly the same width in the British.

So fast into this breach did the leading Germans push that two machine guns—one of the Scots Guards and the other of the Camerons—in an orchard that formed one of the steps that flanked the re-entrant of the 1st Brigade front, had barely time to empty, respectively, two belts and one belt of cartridges, at point-blank range, before their crews were overwhelmed. FitzClarence Farm, manned by the cooks and details of the 1/Scots Guards and previously badly battered by shell fire, suffered the same fate; but the Scots Guards' strong point at Northampton Farm held out and indeed was never taken.

That part of the *3rd Foot Guard Regiment* on the right (north) that had faced against the 1/King's in Polygon Wood was decisively beaten off. Not a German reached the edge of the wood, and as the light improved, the men of the King's from their holes could see that what they first thought was a second attack was in reality a continuous wall of German dead and wounded, lying several deep twenty-five to seventy yards away in a turnip field. The

<sup>1</sup> The above details are taken from "1st Foot Guard Regiment", pp. 48-52, and "Ypres", pp. 114-5.

survivors either lay down and remained opposite the wood, or ran west again to get shelter on the slope of the ground towards the Reutelbeck, which prevented the Liverpool men from having a field of fire of more than a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards. But this change of direction only brought the German Guardsmen under fire of the Black Watch strong point, which for a time stopped them.

The *1st Foot Guard Regiment* south of the *3rd*, after crossing the British front and support trenches, having had, according to its own account,<sup>1</sup> "the two leading companies "diverted by heavy flanking fire from right and left, "turned right towards the strongly held Nonne Bosschen " [which, however, was not then occupied], and left towards "the white chateau in the Herenthage Wood [Veldhoek "Chateau must be meant]. Only a weak portion con- "tinued straight on. The companies in second line "advanced over the captured trenches, received heavy fire "from the right and turned against the strongly wired "Verbeek Farm [the common headquarters of the Black "Watch and Camerons, hastily prepared for defence as a "strong point]. Attempts to storm it failed, and the "troops, like their neighbours, were forced to lie down and "dig in." The supporting battalions, as they reached the original German line, came under accurate artillery fire and suffered heavy casualties.<sup>2</sup>

News of the German onrush against the 1st Brigade now began to trickle back from the front and reach British brigade and divisional headquarters.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously came reports from the 2/Duke of Wellington's of the advance in Veldhoek woods, and stragglers were seen drifting back. A man of the Black Watch reached Colonel Westmacott's (5th Brigade) headquarters at the north-western corner of Polygon Wood with the information that the Germans were in the trenches of his battalion. Thus, as the war diary of the 1/King's remarks, the battalion found itself "supported on the right by the Prussian Guard". There was, in fact, nothing between it and the enemy at this point but a ruined house.

<sup>1</sup> "1st Foot Guard Regiment", p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> The *II. Battalion* lost its battalion staff, all its company officers and most of its senior non-commissioned officers. The record continues that the *II. Battalion* of the *2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment*, which, we have already noticed, was to fill the ever-widening gap between the *1st* and *4th Guard Brigades*, "suffered equally heavy loss and got very few survivors into the front line".

<sup>3</sup> A message from the Northamptonshire to the 1st Brigade reporting the enemy in the Nonne Bosschen and at Verbeek Farm is timed 10.15 A.M.

Colonel Westmacott at once sent the 2/Connaught **11 Nov.** Rangers and 5th Field Company R.E. to form a defensive flank on the right rear of the 1/King's opposite to the Nonne Bosschen and facing south and west. On his communicating with the 2nd Division headquarters at Potijze, General Monro ordered to his assistance three companies of the 2/Highland Light Infantry (of the 5th Brigade but lent to General Fanshawe) and the divisional cyclists, and directed Colonel Pereira (commanding the three Coldstream battalions) to place at his disposal the 1/Coldstream, still only some hundred strong. Of these troops, Colonel Westmacott sent one company of the Highland Light Infantry to the west of Polygon Wood to the immediate right of the 1/King's and held the rest in reserve. General Monro also moved the 2/Oxfordshire L.I. and his divisional squadron to Westhoek behind the Nonne Bosschen, but, owing to heavy enemy artillery fire, the movement took some little time to carry out.

From his headquarters trench on the edge of Glencorse Wood Br.-General FitzClarence early became aware of the disaster to his troops. First, he heard that the Scots Guards had been shelled out of the right of their trenches, and then a mixed party of stragglers actually fell back on his post. On his requesting reinforcements, General Landon—from 1st Divisional headquarters at Hooge—despatched to him from the 2nd Brigade (now commanded by Colonel C. Cunliffe Owen, R.A.), the 1/Northamptonshire, which had only got back from the front line at 2.30 A.M.<sup>1</sup> About the same time he sent the three companies of the 2/Royal Sussex to General Shaw, as we have seen, and Colonel Cunliffe Owen went up to the 1st Brigade headquarters to see what further assistance was required.

Whilst these counter-preparations were in progress, the German Guard battalions which were attacking Fitz-Clarence's troops had advanced but very little further.

<sup>1</sup> The strength of the six battalions under Colonel Cunliffe Owen will give some idea of the state to which the continued fighting had brought them :

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
1/Northamptonshire . . .	5	200
1/L. North Lancashire . . .	1	80
2/Royal Sussex . . .	5	250
1/Gloucestershire . . .	3	200
2/Grenadier Guards . . .	5	130
Irish Guards . . .	3	150

There were also in reserve :—

1/Queen's . . .	2	170
2/Oxfordshire L.I. . .	6	300



Apart from a few stragglers who drifted into Veldhoek woods and into the eastern portion of Glencorse Wood, where they shared the fate of the *Fusilier Battalion* of the *2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment*, the left wing had struck Verbeek Farm, where it was held up by the battalion staffs and about a hundred men of the Black Watch in reserve there. This extemporized garrison was for a time able not only to deal with its immediate opponents, but to enfilade a hedge running north-east towards the Black Watch strong point. To the west of Verbeek Farm, General FitzClarence had organized his headquarters for defence with a machine gun, the brigade signallers, mess orderlies and stragglers, and after two or three hours the defenders of Verbeek Farm withdrew there. Only a few of the enemy entered the outbuilding of the abandoned farm and were later discovered and captured whilst eating the rations they had found there. Verbeek Farm was the left (south) limit of the German breach.

The Black Watch strong point near Polygon Wood was the right limit. Only completed by the 23rd Field Company R.E., an hour before the attack, lying snugly hidden in a depression, and untouched by artillery fire, it came as a complete surprise to the *3rd Foot Guard Regiment* when, recoiling from Polygon Wood, that unit turned west again. It consisted only of a traversed trench inside the four hedges of a cottage garden, which had been converted into an obstacle by a few strands of barbed wire. It was manned by Lieut. F. Anderson and forty rifles of the Black Watch. On receiving fire from it, the Germans divided and tried to pass on either side of it, but only to be hit at close range in flank and then in rear. Harassed also from Verbeek Farm before it was evacuated, and from Polygon Wood, and embarrassed by traverse hedges, they broke up—according to British accounts—into small parties.<sup>1</sup>

About two or three hundred of the *1st Foot Guard Regiment* and about the same number of the *3rd*<sup>2</sup> pressed

<sup>1</sup> The German regimental history says :—“ Among the garden enclosures the leaderless lines abandoned the forward movement and drifted to the right. . . . As no reinforcements could be got to the attackers, the assault came to a standstill at the third of the British lines [there was no third line except the strong points]. The scattered groups dug themselves in. Only part of the *I. Battalion* which had broken through south of the Nonne Bossehen went forward in the original direction.” (“ *1st Foot Guard Regiment*”, p. 50.)

<sup>2</sup> “ Ypres ”, p. 114, says “ the whole of the *1st Foot Guard Regiment* ”, but that regiment’s history, p. 50, states distinctly only part of the *I. Battalion*.

on between Verbeek Farm and the Black Watch strong 11 Nov. point, and, finding no resistance from the Nonne Bosschen—a triangular wood, consisting of small oaks and chestnuts with undergrowth of maple and hazel—passed in at the base, emerged on the long western face, and came in sight of part of the line of the 2nd Divisional artillery, which extended with intervals from Bellewaarde, near Hooge, north-eastwards past the back of Polygon Wood. The batteries of the XLI. Brigade and the 35th Heavy Battery, only two or three hundred yards from the Nonne Bosschen, were fully prepared: the Prussian Guardsmen were at once driven back by point-blank gun fire, and by the rifle fire of the gunners, cooks and brigade headquarters men who could be collected, two sections of the 5th Field Company R.E. and some Connaught Rangers who were on the spur outside the north-western corner of Polygon Wood. The artillerymen were subsequently reinforced by a party from the 35th Heavy Battery and by some stragglers of the Black Watch and Camerons collected by the ~~1st~~ <sup>6th</sup> Brigade transport officer. A few of the Germans threw themselves into a little group of cottages just outside the Nonne Bosschen; but two well-aimed experimental H.E. shells settled one house, and five cooks and duty men of the 5th Field Company R.E., who had been left in camp, at once stormed another from which the enemy were annoying the guns by rifle fire. These men managed to take two prisoners before the remainder of the Guardsmen fled back into the wood, little knowing that the weak parties that had stopped them were the last line of British resistance.<sup>1</sup>

On first hearing of the attack near the Menin road General Haig had ridden out to the White Chateau, and when the news of the German advance towards the Nonne Bosschen came in, he sent his chief General Staff officer to Hooge to suggest to General Landon the organization of a counter-stroke from north to south; but by that time other movements to close the gap were in progress. Reassuring news too came from General Wing of the successful counter-attacks of the Royal Scots Fusiliers and the Duke of Wellington's which had secured the front near the Menin

<sup>1</sup> A wounded German officer captured on the western side of the wood actually asked a battery commander "where are your reserves?" The answer was to point to the line of the guns. Obviously disbelieving, the German then said "what is there behind?" and on getting the reply "divisional headquarters", he exclaimed from the depths of his heart, in German, "God Almighty!"

road, and the suggestion was dropped. As a precaution, however, Sir D. Haig moved the 2/Grenadier Guards and 1/Gloucestershire from the reserve into the woods south-east of Hooge Chateau, close to the road, so as to be ready should the Germans come any further in that direction. He despatched two officers of his staff to Generals d'Urbal and Vidal to represent to them the precarious position of General Moussy near the canal, and the inability of the British to aid him in view of attacks elsewhere. He then directed the 2nd Division to afford the 1st Division what assistance it could; but the only reserves General Monro had in hand were the Irish Guards and 2/Oxfordshire L.I., less than five hundred in all: the latter battalion had already been warned to get into touch with the 1st Division.

The local arrangements for closing the gap near the Nonne Bosschen and recovering the lost trenches of the 1st Brigade were by now well under way. Under direction of General Landon the 2/Royal Sussex, north of Inverness Copse (the western end of the Veldhoek woods), covered the old front of the 1/Scots Guards; the 1/Northamptonshire marching north of the Sussex through Glencorse Wood had arrived at 1st Brigade headquarters; the 2/Oxfordshire were already at Westhoek.

#### THE COUNTER-ATTACK OF THE 2/OXFORDSHIRE L.I.

Except for the party of the Prussian Guard which was still in the Nonne Bosschen, all the enemy troops which had participated in the great attack had been held up and accounted for, and the time had come to recover the ground that had been lost. About noon,<sup>1</sup> Colonel Westmacott (5th Brigade) therefore issued orders to Colonel H. R. Davies, commanding the 2/Oxfordshire to clear the Nonne Bosschen. He gave him the information that the 2/Highland Light Infantry would then join in on his left to recover the Black Watch trenches which extended southwards from the south-west corner of Polygon Wood. At the same time he sent a message to Major C. J. Steavenson commanding the 1/King's that the situation was now well in hand and he was on no account to leave his trenches. To this he received the characteristically British reply

<sup>1</sup> The times of events on the 11th November can only, as a rule, be given approximately; brigades had shrunk to battalions, many orders were in consequence carried verbally by staff officers, and although the substance was recorded, the times were sometimes left out.



“ No intention of quitting our trenches, but what about 11 Nov.  
“ our rations ? ”

Almost simultaneously with the orders from the 5th Brigade, others reached Colonel Davies from the 1st Brigade directing him to come round the south-east corner of Glencorse Wood and co-operate with the Sussex, Northamptonshire and other 1st Division troops in their counter-attack to recover the Scots Guards' and Camerons' trenches. He decided that the Nonne Bosschen must be cleared first, and on his reporting this to the 1st Division, the 1/Gloucestershire and Irish Guards were sent up from Hooge to support him. Moving from Westhoek, with care to avoid losses from the incessant artillery fire, Colonel Davies, as far as can be judged “ past 2 P.M., nearly 3 P.M. ”, sent two companies of the Oxfordshire into the Nonne Bosschen from the north-west, followed by two others in support. A company of the Northamptonshire, seeing the movement, co-operated from Glencorse Wood on the west; the 5th Field Company R.E., charged southward over the open space between the Nonne Bosschen and Polygon Wood on the east; whilst two batteries (the 46th and 54th) of the XXXIX. Brigade R.F.A. shelled the wood and ground ahead, in which task they received unexpected assistance from the German artillery. The Oxfordshire moved very quickly through the Nonne Bosschen, driving the Prussian Guards, big men, some in helmets and some in caps, pell mell before them, and killing or capturing all who resisted. The prisoners taken proved to belong to the *1st* and *3rd Guard Regiments*. As they left the cover of the trees, the survivors came under fire of some Northamptonshire and Camerons in Glencorse Wood and were exterminated.<sup>1</sup> So unexpected and effective was the onslaught in the Nonne Bosschen that the Oxfordshire arrived at the southern end of the wood with practically no losses, and there they halted and joined up with the Northamptonshire and the Engineers.

Shortly before the Oxfordshire had entered the Nonne Bosschen, a force of Germans estimated at over twelve hundred—probably the reserve battalion of the *1st Guard Brigade*—were observed by the 5th Brigade advancing

<sup>1</sup> The account given in the history of the *1st Foot Guard Regiment*, p. 51, is that “ towards evening the last men who had entered the Nonne Bosschen, mostly already wounded, surrendered after a vain attempt “ to break through backwards ”. A British eyewitness describes their coming out of the Nonne Bosschen as just like pheasants quitting a wood, first an odd bird or so, then twos and threes, and then a rush.

westward past the south of Polygon Wood ; but they were soon scattered by gun and rifle fire and made no further effort to assist their comrades.

After a short pause near the edge of the Nonne Bosschen, the Oxfordshire, and troops with them, went forward again and captured the old support trenches of the left of the 1st Brigade. Some Germans in them turned and ran when the counter-attack was thirty or forty yards from them, only to be shot down, whilst others surrendered where they stood. There were still the old front trenches to be regained, and an advance was at once made on them, when, unfortunately, some batteries of the French IX. Corps near Frezenberg, four thousand yards to the north-west—not realizing that the counter-attack had progressed so quickly—began firing shrapnel into the British. The line was halted, the hour being shortly after 3 P.M. Some time elapsed before a message could be communicated to the French artillery and its fire diverted, and by then heavy rain and hail had begun to fall ; and it soon became so dark that further advance was abandoned for the moment. Although there were still some gaps in it the British line was now however secure, and every German who had crossed it in the morning had been accounted for.

As soon as the Nonne Bosschen had been cleared the 1/Gloucestershire was ordered south from the back of Glencorse Wood to fill the space of about four hundred yards between the 2/Duke of Wellington's in the Veldhoek woods and the Northamptonshire near Verbeek Farm. The 2/Grenadier Guards with eighty of the Munsters, 2/Royal Sussex and 1/Loyal North Lancashire, had been warned by the 1st Division to join in on the right of the Oxfordshire counter-attack : but this had been so rapid that they lost touch with Colonel Davies's force, and, as almost immediately everybody "went to ground", it was difficult to find the various headquarters and obtain orders. The three battalions were eventually recalled by Br.-General FitzClarence and withdrawn, leaving the line north of the road held from right to left by the Duke's, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire at Glencorse Wood, the Oxfordshire, with the Irish Guards supporting them, in front of the Nonne Bosschen ; whence the line was taken up round Polygon Wood by the 2nd Division, the 1/King's never having moved and standing exactly where it did in the morning.

The three Scots battalions which formed the 1st

Brigade could only muster about three hundred survivors. 11 Nov. Of the 1/Scots Guards only battalion headquarters and thirty-nine men escaped; in the Black Watch, only one of the officers was left; of the Cameron Highlanders, half the effectives were entirely wiped out. In the counter-attacks however led by the Oxfordshire, that battalion had only 5 killed and 22 wounded: the most serious casualties in these movements were in the 5th Field Company R.E., which, of its six officers, lost the commander, Major A. H. Tyler and two others killed, and one wounded, whilst a quarter of the other ranks fell.

#### THE DEATH OF BR.-GENERAL FITZCLARENCE

Br.-General FitzClarence had no intention of resting content with the mere repulse of the Prussian Guard. In spite of the fatigue of the troops and the heavy rain which had wetted to the skin all except a fortunate few who found refuge in some of the remaining cottages, he was determined to recover his lost front trenches. His own brigade had practically disappeared, so at 5 P.M. he went across to 5th Brigade headquarters at the north-western corner of Polygon Wood to concert measures with Colonel Westmacott. They decided that Colonel Davies with the 2/Oxfordshire and 2/Highland Light Infantry should at 9 P.M. make a surprise flank attack, without artillery support, from the south-western corner of Polygon Wood down the German trenches—from north to south as General Haig had suggested earlier in the day—whilst the other troops under them co-operated. It being absolutely pitch dark and still raining, the time was subsequently postponed to 1 A.M., at which hour the moon would be well up. On returning to Glencorse Wood Br.-General FitzClarence found that General Landon had put under his command the 2/Grenadier Guards, Irish Guards and a few men of the Royal Munster Fusiliers—less than five hundred in all, but many as men then counted. At 11 P.M., therefore, he sent word to Colonel Davies by his staff captain, that he would co-operate in the Oxfordshire attack.

On reconnoitring with the brigade major of the 5th Brigade, as well as it was possible in the darkness, the ground over which he was to move, Colonel Davies discovered that the Germans had dug fresh trenches behind the old British front, so that as his attack proceeded down the



line of the old trenches, it would be enfiladed. Continuous rifle fire, indeed, was sweeping the ground at this time, making even the collection of wounded impossible; and though the storm was dying down, the rain had filled the old trenches and shell holes with water, and made the ground a quagmire. In fact, the general condition, including bitter cold, made the night of the 11th/12th November 1914 one of the most miserable ever experienced by the troops in Flanders. It also came to notice, on enquiry, that there was considerable uncertainty at 5th Brigade headquarters as to where the flank of Shaw's group, towards which the counter-attack should be directed, was now situated. Colonel Davies thereupon sent the brigade major back to say that he did not think it advisable to proceed with the operation. Colonel Westmacott concurred in his views and ordered the troops back. As the Oxfordshire were returning to the Nonne Bosschen between 2 and 3 A.M., on the 12th, they met the 2/Grenadiers and the Irish Guards in column of fours, with Br.-General FitzClarence with his staff at their head determined to go on. But before his column reached its starting point at Black Watch Corner, the general went forward to reconnoitre, and was at once mortally wounded by a rifle bullet. The wondrous spirit that had inspired the 1st Brigade and made its influence felt far beyond his own battalions was stilled for ever.

The brigade staff, after consultation with Colonel Westmacott, the senior officer present, decided to adhere to his previous decision to abandon further operations, and the troops were sent back to the Hooze woods.

Thus the Germans remained in possession of the front line trenches between the Menin road and Polygon Wood. They had fortunately shown little ability to take advantage of a great opportunity, their officers had failed to rise to the occasion and exhibited none of the real tactical skill that was opposed to them. They had little else except heavy casualties to show for their final and desperate attempt to break through.<sup>1</sup> The *Guard* and *4th Divisions* pushed

<sup>1</sup> The "1st Foot Guard Regiment", p. 52, gives the losses of two battalions as 8 officers killed, 8 wounded "and well over 800 men". The *Ehren-Liste* of the regiment, published in 1924, which gives the names of the fallen with the date of death, has 10 officers and 310 rank and file killed on the 11th November. This at the usual proportion would mean about 900 wounded. The only other casualties definitely given are those of the *Fusilier Battalion* of the *2nd Guard Grenadiers* (see footnote, p. 431), 15 officers and about 500 other ranks. According to information furnished by the *Reichsarchiv*, the records contain no exact statement of

their attacks with the greatest gallantry, but the honours 11 Nov. of the 11th November rest not with the attackers, just drawn from a quiet front, but with the weary men of Shaw's, FitzClarence's and Westmacott's attenuated brigades, who, after more than three weeks of incessant fighting, daily bombardment and heavy casualties, faced and held back these famous troops.

### THE ALLIED LEFT

#### 2ND DIVISION, FRENCH IX. CORPS, DE MITRY'S DETACHMENT, XXXII. CORPS AND THE BELGIAN ARMY

Northward of the 1/King's, which from the southern Map 39.  
Sketch  
14. face of Polygon Wood had first embarrassed and then checked the *3rd Foot Guard Regiment*, nothing of importance had happened. The 2nd Division diary mentions an attack by rifle fire on the 2/Coldstream, but it receives no notice in the regimental records. This part of the front was more or less secure; it had always held its own; each day the line remained unchanged it became a little less weak; whereas on the rest of the I. Corps front constant falling back under pressure, and occupation of new positions during the night, had put the construction of good defences out of the question.

On the British left the commander of the French IX. Corps states "artillery and machine-gun barrages sufficed to stop the élan of the German right wing".<sup>1</sup>

The troops of de Mitry and Humbert made counter-attacks, but were unable to recover any of the ground lost on the previous day, and had, indeed, to put in the five battalions taken from General Vidal in order to hold their own.<sup>2</sup> A very heavy attack made by the Germans on Drei Grachten (on the Yser canal 6 miles south of Dixmude) was repulsed, and some who managed to cross near Knoeke (a little north of Drei Grachten) had to retire. They made

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the casualties suffered by Winckler's *Guard Division* on 11th November: they are merely stated to have been "very heavy". The losses for the period 11th to 20th November are, however, put at only 53 officers and 2,081 other ranks, whereas we know, from the regimental accounts mentioned above, that three battalions out of the twelve lost well over 1,300 on one day alone. The total casualties of the *4th Division* for the month of November are given, not in detail, as 61 officers and 2,871 N.C.O.'s and men "lost", of which it is calculated approximately 61 officers and 2,121 other ranks fell between the 11th and 19th November.

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 93.

no attempt to exploit their success of the previous day at Dixmude.

GENERAL SITUATION ON THE NIGHT OF THE  
11TH/12TH NOVEMBER

Map 39.  
Sketch  
14.

The position of Sir D. Haig's force, with all its battalions reduced to companies and even less, and with gun ammunition very short after the great expenditure of the day, now seemed in the highest degree precarious. The general reported to G.H.Q., that, unless immediate action was taken to send support, both the I. Corps and Dubois' IX. Corps might be cut off, for Germans were pressing in on Ypres on both flanks and in the centre. Neither Landon's nor Wing's division had any reserves and Monro had only one weak battalion at his disposal. The corps reserve contained no more than three of the weakest battalions and the two regiments of the 7th Cavalry Brigade.

In response, Sir John French sent General Haig the 1st Cavalry Division as already mentioned, the 1/Hertfordshire (T.F.), the Leicestershire Yeomanry which had just arrived, and 1,500 reinforcements without officers. In a later communication he was able to tell him that General Foch was considering the relief of the I. Corps by troops from the Alsace front. Twenty-five battalions were expected. Meantime it was important that the British should hold on.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As details of the German operations have been given in the text, it is unnecessary to add a note on them. The enemy views of the results of the 11th November are given at the beginning of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CLOSE OF THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 12TH TO 22ND NOVEMBER 1914

(Maps 1, 2, 39 ; Sketches A, B, 15)

#### GENERAL CONDITIONS BETWEEN THE 11TH AND 22ND NOVEMBER

THE German communiqué for the 11th November 1914 issued on the following day is a fair measure of the enemy's failure. It runs, "In the neighbourhood east of Ypres our troops advanced further. A total of more than seven hundred French were taken, as well as four guns and four machine guns."<sup>1</sup> There is no mention of the British this day or next, nor of any Guard attack. The official account written in 1917, under Ludendorff's direction, admits "no break-through had been accomplished", and offers the excuses: "his [the enemy's] numerical superiority, and more especially the strength of his position held up our offensive. The weather conditions, storm and rain [which did not come on until evening] also contributed towards the result." It is, however, claimed that, taken as a whole, the operations of the 11th November "were a great success". This applies with some truth to those of the French and the British. By the defeat of the Germans in their general attack on the Messines—Polygon Wood front, "the utter failure to be successful", as Moltke called it in a letter to the Kaiser shortly afterwards,<sup>2</sup> the result of the first Battles of Ypres was definitely determined in favour of the Allies, and the hope of carrying out Count Schlieffen's receipt for a Cannae in any form was finally put to rest. Officially the struggle

Map 39.  
Sketch  
15.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in "Generaloberst Helmuth von Moltke. Erinnerungen. Briefe. Dokumente 1877-1916", edited by his widow, p. 414.

ends : for the French on the 13th,<sup>1</sup> for the British on the 22nd,<sup>2</sup> and for the enemy on the 30th.<sup>3</sup> The German official monograph of the battle, however, comes to a close on the 20th, and mentions that the idea of continuing the offensive was abandoned on the 17th November. Prisoners taken on the 13th and 17th stated that the attacks then made were "to be decisive and a decision was to be obtained at any price", and that they had "explicit orders to get to Ypres at all costs". The days immediately following the 11th November were certainly not without severe fighting, but the issue was never in doubt.

The weather by this time had turned thoroughly wintry. Cold and rain on the 12th, 13th and 14th were followed according to the records by a little snow on the 15th; then came frost at night, hard frost on the 18th, six hours of snow storm on the 19th and snow covering the ground on the 20th. Apart from the discomfort to the troops thus occasioned, and the first appearance of frost-bite from their standing in trenches half full of water, the physical condition of the men was becoming desperate. The strain of fighting for so many days in succession was at last beginning to tell seriously. Men were reported standing up in the trenches fast asleep under fire, although the opposing infantry was only a hundred or so yards away, and grenade-throwing and sniping made it nearly impossible to obtain regular rest. The ground was now a sea of mud, and, although as mentioned some of the roads had been corduroyed, the paths through the woods leading up to the front and the tracks by the side of the roads were so soft that men literally sank to their knees in them. The carrying up of rations and ammunition under such conditions added very greatly to the fatigue of the already worn-out men.<sup>4</sup> It was also almost impossible when all around was mud to keep rifles clean and prevent them from jamming. Conditions on the enemy side were naturally much the same, and in the Berlin Wireless Bulletin of the 14th November was

<sup>1</sup> "Tableau indiquant les dénominations des batailles."

<sup>2</sup> "The Official Names of the Battles . . . During the Great War 1914-1919." The Mons bar was awarded to all who came within range of the enemy's mobile artillery before midnight 22nd/23rd November 1914.

<sup>3</sup> "S. und G.", p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> At this period transport for the Salient came up at night, usually under fire, through Ypres and Hooge and halted near the western end of the Inverness Copse (the western extremity of the Veldhoek woods), where ration carriers met it.

whispered the first hint that final success might be prevented by "rainy and stormy weather". This was followed on the 15th by reports of "unfavourable weather", and on the 16th by "storms and driving snow". Then in the bulletins came a long series of "situation unchanged".

11-22  
Nov.

The low strength of the British units and the paucity of the gun ammunition supplies formed elements of danger. Though a fair number of reinforcements were arriving, they were reported by some units to be practically untrained, by others to have neither the will nor physique to fight. No young recruits were sent, and many of the men were the dregs of the depots, "old worn drunken wasters", says one report.<sup>1</sup> They did not add to the fighting strength and were merely a source of anxiety. The 1st Division on the 12th November could only muster 68 officers and 2,776 other ranks, roughly a tenth and a seventh of its establishment. Though the 1st (Guards) Brigade numbered only 4 officers and 271 other ranks, one of its battalions, the Black Watch, comprising one officer and 109 men, had to be used in the line. The 2nd Division had about double the strength of the 1st, Wing's composite division of the II. Corps numbered only 4,745 infantry all told on the 15th, whilst General Smith-Dorrien reported that five of its battalions had only a total of five Regular officers between them, one of whom had recently joined, and that two battalions, the 1/Cheshire and 2/Royal Irish Rifles, had no Regular officer. Affairs were much the same on the other side of the line. Prisoners of the *II. Bavarian Corps* stated that most of its companies were reduced to fifty or sixty men, a quarter of their establishment, whilst those of the *4th Division* admitted even heavier losses.

On the 13th November the 8th Division (Major-General F. J. Davies), whose leading troops, the 23rd Brigade, had already been employed with the cavalry, completed its concentration in France.<sup>2</sup> On the same date a G.H.Q.

<sup>1</sup> Some were re-enlisted men of even before the South African War. As an example of the proportion of different reinforcements the 1/Bedfordshire in October, November and December 1914 received: 169 serving soldiers, 43 Army Reservists, 745 Special Reservists and 34 re-enlisted old soldiers.

<sup>2</sup> This division (see Order of Battle, Appendix No. 1) was formed of Regular units withdrawn from Indian and Colonial stations, with the exception of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry and the Field Ambulances which were provided by the Wessex Territorial Division (the infantry and artillery of which had already gone to India). It was composed



operation order was issued, the first since the 29th October, forecasting certain reliefs that it was proposed to carry out as circumstances permitted. Amongst them was the substitution of the II. Corps for the I., which was to go into general reserve. General Haig felt obliged to point out that his line was too extended to be held by the II. Corps in its then weak state; that General Smith-Dorrien's troops had been longer in the line without relief than those of the other corps, practically continuously since they arrived in Flanders; and that they were actually at the moment all in the line.<sup>1</sup>

On the morrow Sir John French was able to give General Haig the good news that General Foch had promised to commence taking over his trenches next day without fail; and that it was intended that the French should take half and the II. Corps the other half of the I. Corps front.

From the 14th November onwards aerial reconnaissance, though still under great weather difficulties, again became possible; but no information, except as regards small troop movements and trains at railway stations, was obtained. It was only through agents that the first news came on the 20th November that the enemy was definitely beginning to shift divisions Eastwards.<sup>2</sup>

Before proceeding to describe the rearrangement of

almost entirely of old soldiers with scarcely any reservists, but was "untrained" according to home standards. One of its artillery brigades was Royal Horse Artillery; it had no howitzer brigade, but two heavy batteries armed with 4·7-inch guns. The division assembled at Hursley Park, near Winchester, between the 19th September and 2nd November; it began embarking on the 4th November. There was therefore no opportunity for training in brigade and division.

<sup>1</sup> Three infantry brigades were with the I. Corps, two with the Indian Corps, and the sixth partly with the Cavalry Corps and elsewhere. Both 3rd and 5th Divisional artillery and engineers, etc., were also in the line, and except for marching from one part to another had never been out of it since the 12th October. Thus broken up, the services of the units of the II. Corps have to some extent escaped due recognition.

<sup>2</sup> The *III. Reserve Corps* (5th and 6th Reserve Divisions) under General von Beseler, the *XIII. Corps* (26th Division and 25th Reserve Division) under General von Fabeck and the *II. Corps* (3rd and 4th Divisions) under General von Linsingen, besides all the cavalry, from the Ypres front, and the *XXIV. Reserve Corps* from the Woëvre, went to Russia at the end of November. (Ludendorff, "My War Memories", p. 103.) Falkenhayn states that "it was now debated whether by shifting the pressure "a break-through should not be attempted against a portion of the "enemy's front on which he had weakened himself for the sake of the "defence of Flanders". The Amiens front from Roye to Bapaume, opposite which lay Bülow's *Second Army*, was suggested, but "the forces in the West were no longer sufficient for its realization".

the Allied line, the events of the days of fighting which followed the 11th November will be dealt with briefly. To save repetition, it may be stated that the enemy reopened a general bombardment at 10 A.M. on the 12th, and that this was continued daily. Some one part or other of the line was usually given special attention, whilst the area enclosed in the Ypres salient, packed with horse lines and field ambulances, was so persistently shelled from so many directions that Sir D. Haig on the 15th November gave orders that as many horses as possible should be sent to the west side of Ypres. Fortunately the Menin road, the main line of communication, was seldom hit, and off the roads the ground was so soft that artillery fire did little more than make shell craters. Ypres itself was fired on daily, as if in revenge for the great German failure with which its name will be for ever associated. 12 Nov.

#### 12TH NOVEMBER

##### SURPRISE ATTACK ON THE FRENCH IX. CORPS

On the 12th November no serious attempt was made by the enemy to resume the attack on the British, in spite of the orders known to have been given to the higher commanders. General Haig ordered that the Germans should be shelled, as far as resources permitted, to keep them quiet, and this was done with excellent results. By the agitated manner in which they set to work to strengthen their lines, it would seem that, as after their defeat at Mons on the 23rd August,<sup>1</sup> they anticipated a British offensive. Over seven hundred German dead were found behind the recovered British line in the 1st Brigade area, and many bodies were visible lying in front of it.

The Prussian Guard showed no sign of movement; but south of the Menin road there were spasmodic attempts at infantry advances, which were easily crushed by artillery fire, and never developed. The French under General Moussy, however, were shelled out of Zwarteleen, again causing anxiety for the flank of Cavan's detachment in that neighbourhood. Two platoons and a machine gun of the 2/K.R.R.C. were sent to fill a gap in the line, and Lieut. J. H. S. Dimmer received the Victoria Cross for

<sup>1</sup> "If the British have the smallest idea of the state we are in, they will make a counter-attack to-night, and smash us up entirely." Bloem's "Vormarsch", p. 145.

continuing to serve the gun, although hit three times by shrapnel and twice by bullets.

Against the French on the British left the Germans were more active. About 6.30 A.M., in the pale light of the early morning, they made a surprise attack on the French 17th and 18th Divisions, and forced the latter formation back some six hundred yards beyond the Broodseinde cross roads.<sup>1</sup> This exposed the left of the 6th Brigade (Br.-General Fanshawe), the extreme left of the British line, and the Germans penetrated behind the flank battalion, the 2/South Staffordshire. Neither the French IX. Corps nor the 2nd Division had any reserves now, and General Lefevre, commanding the 18th Division, called on General Monro for help. For a time the situation seemed grave and General Haig moved forward the 1/Hertfordshire (T.F.) to support the left flank. Fortunately the German advance was soon checked, largely owing to the effective fire of the French and British artillery, and the sturdy defence of the South Staffordshire, supported by the 1/Coldstream Guards, one hundred strong, and a company of the Highland Light Infantry, organized by General Fanshawe into a group to cover his flank. The French 18th Division did not recover its advanced trenches, and this necessitated the left of the British line being thrown slightly back so as to connect with it.

Further north General Humbert (XXXII. Corps), reinforced by the 11th Division,<sup>2</sup> recovered some of the ground lost by his corps near the canal and at Kortekeer, and, as the Yser inundation now extended as far south as Dixmude, the situation in the north seemed to present no reason for further anxiety.

After its night march from the right the 1st Cavalry Division arrived at Hooge in the course of the morning: the 1st Cavalry Brigade was sent up in support of the 1st Division whilst the rest of the division remained in corps reserve.

As if to exemplify the belated material effort being made by Great Britain, five Verey pistols were received from home to light up the front at night; they merely emphasized the superiority of the hundreds of German illuminating pistols of much higher power, and for many months the firing of one was a cause of great hilarity in the enemy front trenches.

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, ii. p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Palat, viii. p. 316.



## 13TH NOVEMBER

RENEWED ATTACK ON THE FRENCH IX. CORPS AND  
ATTACK ON WING'S DIVISION OF THE II. CORPS

The night of the 12th/13th November passed quietly except for three faint-hearted attacks on Cavan's detachment, which were easily driven off by fire. As the morning wore on there were the usual premonitory signs of an infantry attack, troops being seen moving up and assembling in the forward trenches. When, about 9 A.M., General Haig rode towards 2nd Division headquarters near Potijze, he was overtaken by a French staff officer in a motor-car, bearing a letter from General Dubois, in which it was stated that his corps was again being strongly attacked from the east, and the support of artillery and infantry was requested. On arriving at General Monro's headquarters, Sir D. Haig found that, in accordance with previous arrangements made by his artillery commander, Major-General Horne, artillery support was already being afforded; and it was ascertained from General Lefevre, commanding the 18th Division on the British left, that three battalions had come up from the French Army reserve and that he was now holding his own. The 18th Division had, indeed, been attacked by a mixed force of the German *XXVI.* and *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, but a counter-attack by the fresh battalions soon caused anxiety in this quarter to subside. But the whole of the original line was not regained, and the left of the 2nd Division had again to be drawn back in order to join up with the French new position. Further to the left, de Mitry's and Humbert's forces gained ground. On the right of the I. Corps near the Comines Canal, General Vidal had been reinforced by three chasseur battalions and about a thousand cyclists; so General Haig was at last able to feel fairly secure so far as his flanks were concerned.

His own corps, however, was suffering considerable bombardment, at first principally near the Menin road; but towards noon its violence extended south to Cavan's detachment and to Vidal's on its right. Whether a great attack similar to that made on the 11th November was really intended, as prisoners asserted, is not known; the German accounts are silent, and only mention a trifling success at Wytsehaete on this day. In any case, only the

Prussian *4th Division*, about 1.45 P.M., actually moved forward against McCracken's group, the right of Wing's division, in the southern part of Herenthage woods. Its attack was repelled, except in the centre, where, taking advantage of a trench that had been evacuated by the 2/South Lancashire on account of heavy shell fire, the Germans pushed forward a short distance. After some hour and a half's fighting, during which they were taken in flank by the machine guns and rifles of the 1/Cheshire of Gleichen's group, and counter-attacked by two companies of the 1/Gordon Highlanders, they turned back before the Highlanders could reach them with the bayonet, leaving behind prisoners of the *49th*, *140th* and *149th* Regiments, and many dead, all of the *4th Division*.<sup>1</sup>

At night part of the line of Shaw's and Gleichen's groups of Wing's division was withdrawn a short distance to a selected position—practically that of its old support trenches—which was less exposed and ran from the southernmost point of the Herenthage grounds past the front of the chateau.

#### 14TH NOVEMBER

#### RENEWED ATTACKS ON WING'S DIVISION

The night again passed quietly, but shortly after noon the *Guard Division* attacked<sup>2</sup> on either side of the Menin road against Wing's division, which had only 250 men of the K.O.Y.L.I. and 250 divisional mounted troops in reserve. North of the road the 2/Duke of Wellington's was shelled out of some of its front trenches and out of Veldhoek Chateau; but, not to be daunted, the battalion reoccupied them when the enemy infantry advanced and, though hard pressed, eventually succeeded, after a long tussle, in driving the Germans back.

South of the road on the right wing of the division, McCracken's group was attacked, probably by part of the *4th Division*, but warned in good time of the enemy's massing, had little difficulty in holding its own, though the enemy front trenches were only sixty yards away. In

<sup>1</sup> The Gordons had only 1 officer and 1 man wounded in this very effective charge.

<sup>2</sup> "Ypres", p. 122. What regiments took part is not known. The attack is not mentioned in the history of the *2nd Guard Grenadiers*, which, from prisoners, is known to have participated.

Gleichen's group the Germans reached the British front trenches which had been abandoned the previous night, and were held by only a few look-out men. There was confused hand-to-hand fighting in the woods, in the course of which the enemy got a machine gun through the line and enfiladed both the 1/Cheshire and 1/Bedfordshire, with the result that a depth of fifty yards of ground was lost on the front of these battalions.

Against Shaw's group, now under Colonel W. D. Smith, located between the lake south of Herenthage Chateau and the building itself, the *Guard Division* had a small temporary success: the 1/Lincolnshire on the right lost its front trench, but by 2.20 P.M. had regained it and still held its front line intact. On its left, between Herenthage Chateau and the Menin road, the Germans broke in and occupied a two-storied stable, which, sheltered by trees, had not been much damaged until a trench-mortar shell killed the British defenders. After seizing some portions of the neighbouring trench they also occupied the chateau, from which they were driven later by the gallant effort of sixty men of the 2/K.O.Y.L.I. But the Germans retained possession of the trench and stables until 5.30 A.M. next morning. By this time an 18-pdr. of the 54th Battery, under Lieut. A. F. B. Cottrell, had been man-handled through the mud, with the assistance of a party of divisional cyclists, to within seventy yards of the building. Four rounds from the gun accounted for most of the garrison, and a counter-attack of fifty men of the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers regained both stables and trench, so that a bombing party of the 59th Field Company R.E. ready in waiting was not required. Elsewhere in the line single guns and howitzers were brought up to the front trenches to deal with houses from which snipers were firing.

Thus the second attack by the German Guard, though not invested with such dramatic interest as that on the 11th November, or so well remembered, failed even more thoroughly and decisively. The enemy narrative alleges that "Herenthage Wood was completely taken by the "Guard on the 14th November after severe hand-to-hand "fighting".<sup>1</sup> This is hardly the case, and even the German official communiqué makes no claim to any such success. That of the 15th merely says, "The fighting in "West Flanders continues, hindered during the last few

<sup>1</sup> "Ypres", p. 122.



“ days by rainy and stormy weather. . . . The fighting on “ the right flank yesterday also, in consequence of unfavourable weather, showed only trifling progress.” The German account claims a success for the *XV. Corps* opposite Moussy’s and Cavan’s detachment on this day, but the Allied records do not mention any serious fighting in this quarter and no ground was lost. A little further south the French *XVI. Corps* near Wytschaete took about a thousand prisoners.<sup>1</sup> Northwards of Ypres, de Mitry lost a little ground, and his line at night ran from Lange-marck via Kortekeer Cabaret to Het Sas. General Humbert’s corps spent the day in reorganizing and fortifying. From Dixmude to Nieuport “ all was calm ”.<sup>2</sup>

A number of small reliefs were carried out by the British. The principal were: that the Hertfordshire Territorial battalion took the place in the line of the 2/Oxfordshire; the London Scottish were withdrawn into corps reserve; the Camerons were replaced by 106 mixed reinforcements, and the Irish Guards by 150 Munster Fusiliers. 1st Divisional orders formally confirmed the name “ Sanctuary Wood ” (south of Hooge) which had been bestowed about the 5th or 6th November, when that of “ Railway Wood ” (north-west of Hooge) was also given; both were woods where troops of the 1st Division, temporarily relieved and placed in reserve, were hidden from view.

In the *Berliner Tageblatt* about this time, the editor, who was serving as a Reserve lieutenant in Flanders, wrote as follows of the British troops:

“ They soon gave us practical proof that they could shoot, for in the first few engagements our battalion was reduced to about half. . . . We were at once struck with the great energy with which their infantry defended itself when driven back and by the determined efforts made by it at night to recover lost ground. In this it was well supported by its field artillery which, like the French, is at least as good as ours. . . . The main strength of the British undoubtedly lies in the defence and in the utilization of ground.<sup>3</sup> Their nerves undoubtedly react better than those of the Germans, and their sporting instincts render them easier than our men to train in shooting, and in the use of ground and

<sup>1</sup> Palat, viii. p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Palat, viii. pp. 324-5.

<sup>3</sup> As always, from Crécy onwards.

“patrolling. The hardiness of their infantry was very 14 Nov.  
“apparent near Ypres. The shelter trenches were so well  
“constructed that they could not be discovered with the  
“naked eye [there were not many of them, and not much  
“of those that there were]. . . . My own observation  
“shows me that the British are excellent at patrol work,  
“which I cannot say of our men.”

In the course of the 14th November a suggestion was received from General Joffre for creating an entrenched camp to cover Calais and Boulogne and thus secure the disembarkation of British reinforcements. No labour could be spared at the moment, but plans for a “Torres Vedras” to cover Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk—and hence known as “the B.C.D. line”—were taken in hand in co-operation with the French and under superintendence of the Engineer-in-Chief, Br.-General G. H. Fowke. A certain amount of work was done on the line by French Territorials and British reinforcements and engineer Labour battalions,<sup>1</sup> between the winter of 1914/15 and the autumn of 1915.

On the evening of the 14th November, at 8 P.M., Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, who was on a visit to the front, and especially to the Indian Corps, died at St. Omer in the midst of the Army that he loved so well. He had lived to see the materialization of that German war menace, of the imminence of which he had given all the energy of his old age to warn his countrymen.<sup>2</sup> His days had been extended to witness in the first and most dangerous phase of the war how gloriously the British troops did their part, and he died in the hour of one of their greatest victories.

<sup>1</sup> These were battalions of elderly navvies and labourers under civil engineer officers, with usually a R.E. lieutenant-colonel, adjutant and quartermaster.

<sup>2</sup> See “Lord Roberts’s Message to the Nation” and “Lord Roberts’s Campaign Speeches” (John Murray, 6d. each). Among other things, he said (25th October 1912 at Manchester): “There is a way in which England can have war; there is a way in which she is certain to have war and its horrors and calamities: It is by persisting in her present course, her apathy, unintelligence, blindness, in her disregard of the warnings of the most ordinary political eyesight, as well as the examples of history.”

On the 22nd July 1912, in a speech at the Mansion House, he clearly indicated Germany as the aggressor, and said: “It is simply amazing that anyone can imagine that the conflict of which I have spoken can be permanently averted by merely denying that there is any danger, or by abandoning our preparations for defence as an amiable invitation to Germany to do the same.”

15TH-22ND NOVEMBER

RELIEF OF THE I. CORPS AND REORGANIZATION  
OF THE BRITISH LINE

During the 15th November and following days the relief of the I. Corps and the reorganization of the British line took place.<sup>1</sup> The Expeditionary Force evacuated the Ypres area and was reassembled on the front between the La Bassée Canal and Kemmel, so that its two wings were no longer separated by a considerable French force. There was heavy fire from the enemy and his infantry was seen massing from time to time; a determined attack was made on Cavan's detachment and on the 3rd Division on the 17th; and the much contested ruins of the stable of Herenthage Chateau were recaptured by the enemy on the 18th; but there was no real interference with the relief. After the 18th November the German efforts seemed to relax, although shelling continued. On the 22nd Sir John French warned the force that the cessation of attacks might merely indicate the intention of the enemy to rest his troops and prepare for another attack. He therefore impressed on all the necessity for the closest vigilance.

Artillery continuity during the execution of the relief was assured by a system by which one gun per battery of the French relieving force was brought up alongside a British battery, which then withdrew first four and later its remaining two guns. A few heavy batteries were left in position for a little while after the French had taken over. The 115th and 116th Heavy Batteries were the last British units to leave the Salient.

As a first step in the relief, the French IX. Corps on the night of the 15th/16th November extended its front southwards to the north-west corner of Polygon Wood, relieving the 6th Brigade; on the night of the 16th/17th part of the XVI. Corps took over the remainder of the old British front north of the Menin road, relieving the 1st Division and 5th Brigade. In consequence of the congestion of the roads caused by troops moving in both directions, and the difficulty in getting through the town of Ypres, part of which was burning fiercely, the remainder of the

<sup>1</sup> H.R.H. the Prince of Wales joined the Expeditionary Force on the 16th November.



reliefs in the north in the sector from near the Comines Canal to the Menin road—held by Cavan's detachment and Wing's division—were not completed until the early morning of the 21st November. 15-22  
Nov.

In the meantime, on the night of the 14th/15th, the IV. Corps (7th and 8th Divisions under Lieut.-General Sir H. Rawlinson) had moved up and relieved the inner flank brigades of the Indian and III. Corps, so that it was interpolated between these corps on a six-mile front from Pont Logy, near Neuve Chapelle, to Bridoux, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-east of Fromelles. On the right, the 8th Division—less the 23rd Brigade still with the Cavalry Corps—took over from the 8th and 14th Brigades of the II. Corps, which had remained with the Indian Corps; on the left, the 7th Division, still very weak, and without the 21st Brigade retained in general reserve, took over from the 19th Brigade. Sketch 5.

The 8th and 14th Brigades, thus released, and the artillery of the 3rd Division brought away from the Indian Corps, together with the reassembled 13th Brigade, the whole under Major-General Morland, then marched north, and on the nights of the 16th/17th and 17th/18th November took over the front opposite Messines, occupied under the Cavalry Corps by the 2nd Cavalry Division, the 23rd Brigade and the French 156th Regiment. Thus Morland's division held from the left of the 4th Division, which stood fast, from the Douve to Spanbroekmolen.

On the 19th nearly another mile of front had to be taken over suddenly from the French XVI. Corps, as its commander declined to relieve Wing's division of the II. Corps near the Menin road unless this was done. This new part of the front, which carried the northern flank almost abreast of Wytsehaete, was occupied temporarily by a brigade of the 2nd Cavalry Division, left in support of Wing's division. The newcomers were very heavily shelled, and found the trenches dug by the French but very poor protection.<sup>1</sup>

Thus by the 22nd the British held a compact front from the La Bassée Canal at Givenchy to opposite Wytsehaete: <sup>2</sup> Map 1.  
Sketches  
A, B.

<sup>1</sup> Bandsman T. E. Rendle, 1/D.C.L.I. (14th Brigade), received the Victoria Cross for rescuing men buried in the trenches and attending to wounded on the 20th near Wulverghem, under this fire.

<sup>2</sup> The general situation on the Western Front is shown on Map 40. From this it will be seen that the French held 430 miles, the British 21 and the Belgians 15.

Indian Corps, H.Q. Hinges	2 miles.	Givenchy to near Neuve Chapelle.
IV. Corps, H.Q. Merville .	6 miles.	On to Bridoux (1½ miles north-east of Fromelles).
III. Corps, H.Q. Bailleul .	10 miles.	On to Wulverghem.
II. Corps, with a cavalry division, H.Q. Bailleul .	3 miles.	On to Wytsehaete.
I. Corps and Cavalry Corps (less a division), H.Q. Hazebrouek . . . .		In reserve behind Bailleul.

Many messages of congratulation, good-will and thanks for assistance rendered passed in these days between the French and British commanders. Their troops had fought in the great struggle not only alongside each other but actually with units intermingled, and they had renewed the brotherhood in arms formed by their grandfathers sixty years before in the Crimea. Difficulties there had been, and were still to be passed through, but the solid bond established in these days was never to be dangerously shaken, and Generals Foch and Haig were to work together with mutual understanding on many another field. To Colonel Eychère—commanding the 4th Zouave Regiment put at British disposal on the 31st October—whose troops had fought on the Menin road and whose last battalion was withdrawn 246 strong on the 17th November, General Haig offered special thanks.

On the 20th November the commander of the British Forces at Ypres was promoted to the rank of full general for distinguished service in the field.

#### RETROSPECT

Map 2.  
Sketch A. The Battles of Ypres formed the last phase of open fighting before the belligerents settled down to undiluted trench warfare. The great struggle had begun as an encounter battle, and it developed on the Allies' side into a defensive one. It must not, however, be imagined that the British Expeditionary Force had been able to improvise suddenly a complete defensive system. Such trenches as were used by the infantry were not continuous and were but shallow cover, often only shelter pits, dug at night or scratched out under fire; the limited number of entrenching tools did not permit of adequate trenches being made. The artillery had little protection except that afforded by the

natural features of the ground ; but as aeroplane observation was in its infancy and the country wooded, the British artillery as a rule was effectively hidden. Only in those parts of the front where the German efforts were successfully resisted from the outset, like Polygon Wood, was there gradually found time and opportunity for the erection of wire, as it became available.

The British Army has fought many a defensive battle with success :—Crécy, Agincourt, Albuera, Waterloo, Inkerman ; and Ypres proved that the men of 1914, recruited haphazard by voluntary enlistment, were fully the equals of their forefathers in valour and determination. They were more than the equals, not only of the flower of the youth of Germany in the volunteer units of the new Reserve corps, but also of the picked representatives of the German nation selected by the process of universal service. That British troops have fought comparatively few successful offensive battles is due mainly to their commanders never having at their disposal forces adequate for such a purpose, and seldom being in a strategic situation that justified it. Yet Minden, Blenheim, Salamanca and Vittoria had shown what they were capable of in the attack, and the counter-attacks at Ypres were not only crowned with success, but had truly marvellous results. They indicated what might have been accomplished had General Haig been in command of numbers commensurate with his task. When the opposing sides are of nearly equal value in training, courage and experience, *ebenbürtig*, as the Germans call it, and equally well commanded, decisive success can only be obtained—given even the advantages of surprise and preponderance of material—by superior numbers. The Germans had a numerical superiority of nearly two to one in their favour on the Ypres front as a whole, and far more favourable odds in particular sectors, but it did not avail them to compensate for inferior leading and other factors.

Perhaps the comparative strength of the forces has been pointed out in the narrative with too much insistence ; but the reason for drawing special attention to the subject is that the German official narrative repeatedly claims, in excuse for failure, that the Allies were in superior numbers, finally averring that “up to 14th November 1914, 40 divisions had been put into the battle round Ypres by the Western Allies, whilst only 25 German divisions were opposed to them”.<sup>1</sup> Why the date 14th November was selected is

<sup>1</sup> “ Ypres ”, p. 130.



not apparent. If the map, or sketch for the 11th November—the decisive day, and no troops had been taken out of the battle area at this date except a German cavalry division—be examined, it will be found that round Ypres between the Lys at Frélinghien and the Ypres Canal near Bixschoote, there are 20 German divisions and 4 infantry brigades, making, with odd battalions, a total of more than 22 divisions with 8 cavalry divisions. Against these were arrayed 13 Allied divisions and 8 cavalry divisions (in rifles and guns hardly the equivalent of one infantry division).<sup>1</sup> For comparison, 14, not the “40” of the German account, is the true total. Could bayonets be counted, the preponderance would probably be still heavier in favour of the enemy; for, though many of his battalions had suffered terribly, others were more or less fresh, and the average strength must have been higher than that of the Allied units. But it was the enemy’s tremendous superiority in heavy artillery rather than the numbers of his infantry that oppressed the French and British, and he had, besides, trench-warfare stores, trench mortars, rifle grenades, hand-grenades, lightball pistols, etc. in abundance, whereas the Allies were only in the stage of improvising small quantities. The German official statement, that “the enemy’s superiority in “material, guns, trench mortars, machine guns and aero-planes, etc., was two-fold, three-fold, even four-fold”,<sup>2</sup> if seriously meant—it was not true in 1914, and is beyond the mark even for 1918—is an extraordinary tribute to the effective tactical use made of such small amount of material as the Allies possessed in October and November 1914.

The musketry of the Expeditionary Force was such that its bursts of rapid fire were repeatedly mistaken for machine-gun or automatic rifle fire. In the German account already quoted, the British are credited with “quantities of machine guns”, so that “over every bush, hedge and fragment of wall floated a thin film of smoke betraying a machine gun rattling out bullets”, and “the roads were swept by machine-gun fire”. Yet in 1914

<sup>1</sup> The German formations are taken exclusively from published German official sources, and not from British intelligence reports of the time, though these agree closely. On the front north of Bixschoote, separated by the canal and the Yser inundation, there were 5½ German divisions against 7½ Allied divisions (counting the 6 weak Belgian divisions as 3). On the front south of the Lys down to the La Bassée Canal there were 6 German divisions against 3½ British and Indian divisions, and 1 brigade of an Indian cavalry division.

<sup>2</sup> “Ypres”, p. 133.

each battalion and cavalry regiment had only two such weapons on taking the field, and many of these had been damaged or destroyed and were only gradually replaced.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, as regards the effect of British artillery fire, we are told that "advancing columns were under accurate fire at long range . . . all roads leading to the rear were continually shelled for a long way back . . . it was not possible to push up reserves owing to heavy artillery fire . . . any regular transport of supplies became impossible". These remarks are probably fully justified, as the British artillery quickly learnt from the French the great value of keeping the enemy's communications under fire at night, and the main roads were searched with the 6-inch guns as far as ammunition would allow.

In unity of command and the homogeneous nature of their formations and their material, the Germans possessed advantages that were altogether lacking in a composite force of French, Belgian, British and Indians. Though the whole-hearted co-operation of the Allied leaders at Ypres in 1914 must never be forgotten, yet it could not compensate for difference of training, tactics, temperament and language.

The splendid discipline and high courage of the German troops may be freely admitted, for these qualities were exhibited in many a fight. Why then, with everything in their favour, did the Germans fail? Apart from the first and all-important factor, the determination of the Allies not to let them pass and the dogged resistance of the rank and file, the decisive features would appear to be the superior shooting by the French with their 75's, and by the British both with gun and rifle; the skill in the use of ground; the employment of cavalry as a mobile reserve; and the bold and skilful use in counter-attack of small reserves drawn, as a rule, from parts of the line that General Haig and other leaders judged might be thinned

<sup>1</sup> The commandants of the School of Musketry, Hythe, during the years before the war, to whose influence the good shooting was so largely due, were:—

Colonel C. C. Monro, 1903-07;  
Colonel G. G. A. Egerton, 1907-09;  
Colonel W. N. Congreve, 1909-11;  
Colonel H. G. Ruggles-Brise, 1911-14.

The rapid fire of the British infantry was introduced as a substitute for additional machine guns that were refused to it. In 1909 the School of Musketry urged that each battalion should have six guns instead of two; the suggestion was declined for financial reasons, and subsequent reductions of the Army Estimates and Vote made any such addition impossible. It was therefore decided to increase the rate of fire of each rifle by the special training of the men.

for the benefit of more vital sectors. This was, however, a process that could not be repeated indefinitely. A really determined enemy effort, methodically prepared with artillery and well backed up by troops in depth, should have succeeded, and the Germans had ample troops for the purpose. Fortunately, they do not seem to have been able to discover where exactly our line of defence was, and could not prepare any large extent of front prior to any attack. They did, indeed—using mass tactics against our small platoons and scattered groups—"break in" several times, but they never "broke through". Whilst on the Allied side the generalship and staff work largely contributed to the victory, on the enemy side it was generalship and staff work that failed.<sup>1</sup> If, as a German writer has suggested, the 260 guns had been concentrated against a particular piece of the front, instead of distributed; if persistent infantry efforts had been made at one place, say St. Eloi or Langemarek, instead of following the usual German process of seeking for a weak place by trying many, the attackers would have had a better chance of succeeding, though they would without doubt have been countered by the skill of the Allied leading and the tenacity of the troops. An operation of this kind requires very fine staff work in removing the divisions that are exhausted and replacing them by fresh ones, but was not beyond German powers.

Such successes as the enemy attained were never exploited. It seems more than possible that the German leaders imagined, or were informed, that they were opposed by the forty divisions of their official account. To the Teutonic mind it would be inconceivable that the Allies should stand and fight at grave numerical disad-

<sup>1</sup> The latest German critic of the war, Lieut.-Colonel Hierl, of the General Staff of *Groupcommand I.* of the *Reichswehr*, in an instructional manual, "Der Weltkrieg in Umrissen", Part II. pp. 30-2, attributes the ill-success at Ypres to the higher commands. He points out that the *Fourth Army* merely sent forward the five Reserve corps in line, without holding back a reserve to exploit any weak place that might be found; that the *Sixth Army* might—as was possible—have formed *Army Group Fabeck* (*XV. Corps, II. Bavarian Corps* and *26th Division*, with later the *3rd Division, 25th Reserve Division* and *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*) seven days earlier, and sent it to attack on the 22nd instead of the 29th; and that O.H.L. never thought of backing up the young Reserve corps with one or two seasoned divisions. He further explicitly says that the generals did not "help" the troops, but thought that the art of leadership was exhausted when they had urged their troops forward. "The attackmania was a weak point in the German peace training", and offensive spirit and offensive tactics were often confused.



vantage, especially after the Ypres Salient was enveloped on both flanks, when in accordance with German manœuvre decisions they were annihilated. From statements made by enemy prisoners, and from questions asked of British prisoners in enemy hands, it appears that the German General Staff inferred that the small and scattered parties exhibited in the front line by the Allies were an outpost system, covering a battle position or masses of reserves—a scheme adopted by General Ludendorff later on for the defensive battle. So it may be that the Germans did not press on after a successful break-in, like that at Zandvoorde or Gheluvelt, for fear of falling into a trap. The woods favoured the Allies; they not only did conceal the infantry and the artillery positions, but in their shelter there might have been fourteen British Territorial Force divisions, and as many mounted brigades, besides new formations, ready for a great counter-stroke. The great German spy system had been so completely checkmated that the enemy had no information.

Whether the Germans were out-fought or took counsel of their fears, the second great rush of their hosts was in any case stayed: but the cost was overwhelming. In the British battalions which fought at the Marne and Ypres, there scarcely remained with the colours an average of one officer and thirty men of those who landed in August 1914. The old British Army was gone past recall, leaving but a remnant to carry on the training of the New Armies;<sup>1</sup> but the framework that remained had gained an experience and confidence which was to make those Armies invincible. Nor had the old Army fallen in vain. It had created such an impression on the Germans that their leaders turned aside to seek for less stubborn foes and left the British sector alone, attempting no serious attack on it for three long years.<sup>2</sup> If they had done naught else, the men of the Expeditionary Force would have done far more than could have been expected of their numbers.

They went forth first a little Army :  
 All its men were true as steel.  
 The hordes of the enemy were hurled against them ;  
 They fell back, but their heart failed not.

<sup>1</sup> Of the small number of trained staff officers, 56 Staff College graduates fell in 1914.

<sup>2</sup> No preparations were made to exploit the gas attack at Ypres in 1915; it began with only a half-hearted experiment against French coloured troops, although it led to severe local fighting.

## BRITISH LOSSES

They went forward again and held their ground :  
 Though their foes were as five to one.  
 They gave time for our host to muster :  
 The host of men who never thought to fight.  
 A great host and a mighty :  
 Worthy of the men who died to gain time.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTE I.

## THE BRITISH LOSSES

The total losses of the British Expeditionary Force between the 14th October and 30th November, as reported by the Adjutant-General in France, Lieut.-General Sir C. F. N. Macreedy, were :

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
Killed . . . . .	593	6,712
Wounded . . . . .	1,335	27,507
Missing . . . . .	370	17,588
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,298	51,807

Worked out in detail in later years, they would appear to be higher.

	Officers.			Other Ranks.			Unallotted.		Totals.	
	K.	W.	M.	K.	W.	M.	Officers.	O.R.	Officers.	O.R.
1st Cavalry Div. . .	19	56	9	146	483	90	..	..	84	719
2nd " . . . . .	17	50	8	107	515	112	..	..	75	784
3rd " . . . . .	33	61	15	267	1,081	548	..	..	109	1,896
Infantry (attd. Cavalry Corps)	..	..	..	..	..	..	24	755	24	755
1st Division . . .	67	162	52	745	2,940	2,262	..	..	281	5,956
2nd " . . . . .	67	149	11	952	3,571	1,019	..	..	227	5,642
3rd " . . . . .	93	189	69	1,099	3,949	2,956	631	..	351	8,004
4th " . . . . .	46	105	10	902	2,625	2,201	..	..	161	5,728
5th " . . . . .	51	103	38	739	2,721	1,450	..	..	192	4,910
6th " . . . . .	40	112	15	674	2,663	1,090	16	709	183	5,136
7th " . . . . .	87	208	77	979	3,705	4,809	..	..	372	9,493
8th " . . . . .	8	8	1	..	..	..	..	624	17	624
Indian Corps (and attached units)	60	113	19	184	758	90	British	..	192	1,032
	26	65	9	552	3,162	913	Indian	..	100	4,627

Totals :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks (British).	Other Ranks (Indian).
Killed . . . . .	614	6,794	552
Wounded . . . . .	1,381	25,020	3,162
Missing . . . . .	333	16,627	913
Unallotted . . . . .	40	2,088	..
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,368	50,529	4,627

In addition :

Unallotted . . . . .	631
Grand total . . . . .	<hr/> <u>58,155</u>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by permission from a Psalm written by Mr. A. W. Pollard, C.B., and used at a Special Service 5th January 1918.

The grand total from the commencement of the campaign, as reported by the Adjutant-General in France, was:—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
Killed . . . . .	842	8,631
Wounded . . . . .	2,097	37,264
Missing . . . . .	688	40,342
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3,627	86,237

The greater part of this loss had fallen on the infantry of the first seven divisions, which originally numbered only 84,000.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE II.

THE GERMAN LOSSES

The German losses during the Battles of Ypres have not been published, nor indeed finally compiled. In reply to a question the *Reichsarchiv* has kindly furnished the following statement:

“The casualty reports of individual corps of the *Fourth Army* were returned only very irregularly, and usually covered considerable periods. Figures for losses, therefore, up to the 24th October exactly are impossible of compilation. The following extracts show the losses of the three Reserve corps in question from the time of their first entering the line in Flanders up to the end of November 1914.”

The extracts after addition show the following losses in killed, wounded and missing:—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
<i>XXIII. Reserve Corps.</i>		
19th Oct. to 7th Nov. . . . .	237	9,801
8th Nov. to 18th Nov. . . . .	63	2,870
19th Nov. to 27th Nov. . . . .	3	157
28th Nov. to 1st Dec. . . . .	8	70
<i>XXVI. Reserve Corps.</i>		
19th Oct. to 22nd Nov. . . . .	326	13,054
23rd Nov. to 27th Nov. . . . .	2	368
28th Nov. to 1st Dec. . . . .	4	245
<i>XXVII. Reserve Corps.</i>		
19th Oct. to 20th Nov. . . . .	347	15,264
21st Nov. to 28th Nov. . . . .	3	911
29th Nov. to 1st Dec. . . . .	5	519

It would appear, therefore, that these new corps lost about half their infantry, and that the divisions of the *XXVII. Reserve Corps*, which was wholly, and of the *XXVI.* which was partly, engaged against the British front, lost more heavily than the British divisions opposed to them.

In a further communication, it was stated that the records were

<sup>1</sup> The reinforcements sent out, apart from new formations, were:—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.	Indians.
15th Aug. to 30th Sept. 1914 . . . . .	485	31,888	..
1st to 31st October 1914 . . . . .	199	46,011	300
1st to 10th November 1914 . . . . .	278	30,411	..
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	962	108,310	300



not quite complete, but the following figures were given tentatively under reserve, with the note that the figures for missing and prisoners were nearly all too high. "A considerable percentage under this heading is due to men having strayed from their units, and a further percentage was later found to be dead or wounded. We have numerous reports to that effect, but unfortunately in only a few cases is a numerical correction attached to the returns."

(1) Battle of Lille, 15th to 28th Oct.  
(front Fromelles—Gheluwe)

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing and Prisoners.	Total.
Officers . . . . .	80	200	20	300
Other Ranks . . . . .	1,600	6,800	2,600	11,000

(2) Battle of the Yser, 18th Oct. to 30th Nov.  
(front Gheluvelt to the Coast)

Officers . . . . .	500	1,050	100	1,650
Other Ranks . . . . .	10,300	46,300	18,000	74,600

(3) Battle of Ypres, 30th Oct. to 24th Nov.  
(front from the Lys to Gheluvelt)

Officers . . . . .	350	670	45	1,065
Other Ranks . . . . .	6,700	28,500	10,500	45,700

134,315 <sup>1</sup>

This total of 134,315 apparently excludes the wastage during the period in formations not actually engaged in the battle areas, e.g. in front of Armentières after the 28th October, and does not include the Battle of La Bassée. As the six divisions of *Reserve Corps XXIII.*, *XXVI.* and *XXVII.* lost, up to 18th/22nd October, 40,989 of the total, average 6,800, this leaves less than 94,000 casualties for the remaining 19—certainly employed for a shorter time than those in the *Reserve corps*—of the 25 divisions stated to have been engaged round Ypres—an average of less than five thousand per division.

Allowance being made for the length of time divisions were in the line and engaged in serious fighting, the average losses per division of the two sides do not appear from the statistics available to be widely different. The average, 6,800, of the six German divisions of the *XXIII.*, *XXVI.* and *XXVII.* *Reserve Corps* engaged from 19th October to 20th November in the Battles of Ypres, though not in the severe fighting of the final days, is slightly more than the 6,500 of the British first seven divisions, two of which began the struggle on the 10th October in the Battle of La Bassée. But as the British and German methods of recording casualties differ, shell and bullet wounds are not distinguished, and the exact enemy strength per division is not known, there is little to be learnt by a comparison of this kind.<sup>2</sup> All that is certain is that the losses on

<sup>1</sup> Another series of figures give the *total* losses from La Bassée to the Sea between 13th October and 24th November 1914 as 123,910.

<sup>2</sup> This opinion has been confirmed by the receipt by a British officer of a letter from a German official of the *Reichsarchiv* in which it is stated that "casualty figures for the first months of the war are incomplete

both sides were very heavy, and as regards the quality of the troops, irreplaceable.

NOTE III.

MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE FIGHTING IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 1914

The medical arrangements will be found described in detail in "The Official History of the War, Medical Services, General History, Volume II." It will be sufficient here to indicate in outline the organization during the Battles of La Bassée and Ypres.

Two general and two stationary hospitals were mobilized with **Map 1.** each division.<sup>1</sup> During the early operations of the IV. Corps near Ghent, a small hospital was formed at Ostend, which was cleared by a hospital ship. Then a clearing hospital and later a reception hospital near the station were established at Ypres, whence the patients were evacuated to Dunkirk, from which port they went by sea to England, or to Hazebrouck by motor ambulance convoy.

During the encounter fighting 12th-21st October, dressing stations were formed in convenient buildings.

Clearing hospitals were opened as follows:—

No. 1	Clearing Hospital—St. Omer ;
" 2	" " Bailleul ;
" 3	" " first at Armentières and then moved back to Bailleul and Hazebrouck ;
" 4	" " Poperinghe ;
" 5	" " Hazebrouck, with a detachment at St. Omer ;
" 6	" " Béthune and later at Chocques ;
" 7	" " Poperinghe and St. Omer, then at Merville ;
" 8	" " St. Omer, then at Bailleul ;
Lahore	" " Bailleul, then at Merville ;
Meerut	" " Béthune, then at Chocques.

All divisions had at first two or more motor ambulances, provided by No. 1 Motor Ambulance Convoy of thirty to forty cars ; No. 2 Motor Ambulance Convoy arrived on 14th October ; No. 3, on the 15th ; No. 4, on the 28th ; No. 5, on the 11th November. Eight ambulance trains, too, were organized by the 11th October, so there was sufficient means to get the wounded back to the lines of communication.

Advanced dressing stations were formed close up to the front, e.g. on the II. and III. Corps front at Gorre, Richebourg l'Avoué, La Chapelle d'Armentières, Houplines, Ploegsteert, with Divisional Main Dressing Stations at Béthune, Locon, Estaires, Erquinghem, Armentières, Neuve Eglise, Kemmel.

In the I. and IV. Corps the main work of the medical services **Map 2.** was concentrated in Ypres. The 7th Division had dressing stations **Sketch A.**

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and unreliable"; and by the admission of a German general that the losses returned were sometimes the difference in strength on different dates, no account being taken of reinforcements received. See also footnote, p. 444.

<sup>1</sup> A stationary hospital, 200 beds ; a general hospital, 520.

in Ypres; the 1st Division outside the town on the Menin road; the 2nd Division, advanced dressing stations at St. Julien and Wieltje and a main dressing station in Ypres. The wounded were brought back to Ypres from the regimental aid posts in horse and motor vehicles by the bearer divisions of the field ambulance, whence they were got away as soon as possible by motor ambulance to the ambulance and ordinary trains. For their reception on the L. of C. there were by the end of the year:—at Rouen, six general and four stationary hospitals; at Havre, six general hospitals; at Etretat, one; and at Le Touquet (near Paris Plage), No 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital.



## APPENDICES



## ORDER OF BATTLE

OF THE

## BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

OCTOBER 1914<sup>1</sup>

<i>I. Corps</i> . . . . .	Lieut.-Gen. Sir D. Haig, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., A.D.C.- Gen.
<i>1st Division</i> . . . . .	Maj.-Gen. S. H. Lomax.
<i>1st (Guards) Brigade</i>	1 C. Gds., 1 S. Gds., 1 Black Watch, 1 Cameron, the London Scottish (from 7th November 1914).
<i>2nd Brigade</i> . . . . .	2 R. Sussex R., 1 L. N. Lancs. R., 1 North'n. R., 2 K.R.R.C.
<i>3rd Brigade</i> . . . . .	1 Queen's R., 1 S. Wales Bord., 1 Gloster R., 2 Welch R., 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers (from 7th December 1914).
<i>Mounted Troops</i> . . . . .	A Squad. 15 Hussars, 1 Cyclist Coy.
<i>Artillery</i> <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	XXV. Bde. R.F.A., 113, 114 and 115 Batteries; XXVI. Bde. R.F.A., 116, 117 and 118 Batteries; XXXIX. Bde. R.F.A., 46, 51 and 54 Batteries; XLIII. (How.) Bde. R.F.A., 30, 40 and 57 Batteries; 26 Hvy. Bty. R.G.A.
<i>Engineers</i> . . . . .	23 and 26 Fd. Coys. R.E., 1st Lowland Fd. Coy. R.E. (from 14th December 1914).
<i>2nd Division</i> . . . . .	Maj.-Gen. C. C. Monro, C.B.
<i>4th (Guards) Brigade</i>	2 G. Gds., 2 and 3 C. Gds., 1 I. Gds., 1st Hertfordshire Regt. (from 19th November 1914).
<i>5th Brigade</i> . . . . .	2 Worc. R., 2 Oxf. and Bucks. L.I., 2 H.L.I., 2 Conn. Rang., 9th Highland L.I. (from 24th November 1914).

<sup>1</sup> The Order of Battle of the Cavalry Division and of the I., II. and III. Corps, as constituted in August 1914, will be found in Volume I., Appendix 1. For the convenience of the student a condensed version of the Order of Battle of the I., II. and III. Corps, using Army List abbreviations, is given here.

<sup>2</sup> The 57th (How.) Battery was transferred to the 8th Division on 26th November 1914.



<i>6th Brigade</i>	. . .	1 The King's R., 2 S. Stafford R., 1 R. Berks R., 1 K.R.R.C.
<i>Mounted Troops</i>	. . .	B Squad. 15 Hussars, 2 Cyclist Coy.
<i>Artillery</i>	. . .	XXXIV. Bde. R.F.A., 22, 50 and 70 Batteries; XXXVI. Bde. R.F.A., 15, 48 and 71 Batteries; XLI. Bde. R.F.A., 9, 16 and 17 Batteries; XLIV. (How.) Bde. R.F.A., 47, 56 and 60 Batteries; 35 Hvy. Bty. R.G.A.
<i>Engineers</i>	. . .	5 and 11 Fd. Coys. R.E., 1st East Anglian Fd. Coy. R.E. (from 24th December 1914).
<i>II. Corps</i>	. . . . .	General Sir H. L. Smith-Dorrien, G.C.B., D.S.O.
<i>3rd Division</i>	. . . . .	Maj.-Gen. Hubert I. W. Hamilton, C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O. <sup>1</sup>
<i>7th Brigade</i>	. . .	3 Worc. R., 2 S. Lancs. R., 1 Wilts. R., 2 R. Ir. Rif.
<i>8th Brigade</i>	. . .	2 R. Scots, 2 R. Ir. R., 4 Midd'x. R., 1 Devon R., 1st H.A.C. (from 9th November 1914).
<i>9th Brigade</i>	. . .	1 North'd Fus., 4 R. Fus., 1 Lincoln R., 1 R.S. Fus., 10th The King's (from 25th November 1914).
<i>Mounted Troops</i>	. . .	C Squad. 15 Hussars, 3 Cyclist Coy.
<i>Artillery</i>	. . .	XXIII. Bde. R.F.A., 107, 108 and 109 Batteries; XL. Bde. R.F.A., 6, 23 and 49 Batteries; XLII. Bde. R.F.A., 29, 41 and 45 Batteries; XXX. (How.) Bde. R.F.A., 128, 129 and 130 Batteries; 48 Hvy. Bty. R.G.A.
<i>Engineers</i>	. . .	56 and 57 Fd. Coys. R.E., the Cheshire Fd. Coy. R.E. (from 10th December 1914).
<i>5th Division</i>	. . . . .	Maj.-Gen. Sir C. Fergusson, <sup>2</sup> Bt., C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O.
<i>13th Brigade</i>	. . .	2 K.O.S.B., 2 D.W.R., 1 R.W.K., 2 K.O.Y.L.I., 1/9 London (Queen Victoria's Rifles) (from 27th November 1914).
<i>14th Brigade</i>	. . .	2 Suffolk R., 1 E. Surrey R., 1 D.C.L.I., 2 Manch. R.
<i>15th Brigade</i>	. . .	1 Norfolk R., 1 Bedfs. R., 1 Cheshire R., 1 Dorset R., 6th Cheshire Regt. (from 11th December 1914).
<i>Mounted Troops</i>	. . .	A Squad. 19th Hussars, 5 Cyclist Coy.

<sup>1</sup> Killed in action 14th October 1914; succeeded by Maj.-Gen. C. J. Mackenzie, C.B., 15th October; succeeded by Maj.-Gen. F. D. V. Wing, C.B., 29th October.

<sup>2</sup> Promoted lieutenant-general; succeeded by Major-General T. L. N. Morland, 18th October 1914.

- Artillery* . . . . XV. Bde. R.F.A., 11, 52 and 80 Batteries ;  
XXVII. Bde. R.F.A., 119, 120 and  
121 Batteries ; XXVIII. Bde. R.F.A.,  
122, 123 and 124 Batteries ; VIII.  
(How.) Bde. R.F.A., 37, 61 and 65  
Batteries ; 108 Hvy. Bty. R.G.A.
- Engineers* . . . . 17 and 59 Fd. Coys. R.E., 2nd Home  
Counties Fd. Coy. R.E. (from 24th  
December 1914).
- III. Corps* . . . . . Maj.-Gen. W. P. Pulteney, C.B.,  
D.S.O.
- 4th Division* . . . . . Maj.-Gen. H. F. M. Wilson, C.B.
- 10th Brigade* . . . . 1 R. Warwick R., 2 Seaforths, 1 R. Ir.  
Fus., 2 R. Dub. Fus., 7th Argyll and  
Sutherland Highlanders (from 6th Janu-  
ary 1915).
- 11th Brigade* . . . . 1 Somerset L.I., 1 E. Lancs. R., 1 Hamp-  
shire R., 1 Rifle Bde., 1st London Rifle  
Brigade (from 19th November 1914).
- 12th Brigade* . . . . 1 King's Own R., 2 Lancs. Fus., 2 Innis-  
killing Fus., 2 Essex R., 2nd Mon-  
mouthshire Regt. (from 21st December  
1914).
- Mounted Troops* . . . . B Squad. 19 Hussars, 4 Cyclist Coy.
- Artillery* . . . . XIV. Bde. R.F.A., 39, 68 and 88 Bat-  
teries ; XXIX. Bde. R.F.A., 125, 126  
and 127 Batteries ; XXXII. Bde.  
R.F.A., 27, 134 and 135 Batteries ;  
XXXVII. (How.) Bde. R.F.A., 31, 35  
and 55 Batteries ; 31 Hvy. Bty.  
R.G.A.
- Engineers* . . . . 7 and 9 Fd. Coys. R.E., 1st (St. Helens)  
West Lancashire Fd. Coy. R.E. (from  
1st January 1915).
- 6th Division* . . . . . Maj.-Gen. J. L. Keir, C.B.
- 16th Brigade* . . . . 1 The Buffs, 1 Leicester R., 1 K.S.L.I.,  
2 Y. and L.R.
- 17th Brigade* . . . . 1 R. Fus., 1 N. Stafford R., 2 Leins. R.,  
3 Rifle Bde.
- 18th Brigade* . . . . 1 W. Yorks. R., 1 E. Yorks. R., 2 Foresters,  
2 Durham L.I., 1/16th London (Queen's  
Westminster Rifles) (from 11th Novem-  
ber 1914).
- Mounted Troops* . . . . C Squad. 19 Hussars, 6 Cyclist Coy.
- Artillery* . . . . II. Bde. R.F.A., 21, 42 and 53 Batteries ;  
XXIV. Bde. R.F.A., 110, 111 and 112  
Batteries ; XXXVIII. Bde. R.F.A.,  
24, 34 and 72 Batteries ; XII. (How.)  
Bde. R.F.A., 43, 86 and 87 Batteries ;  
24 Hvy. Bty. R.G.A.
- Engineers* . . . . 12 and 38 Fd. Coys. R.E., 1st London  
Fd. Coy. R.E. (from 11th December  
1914).

*19th Brigade* . . . . 2 R.W. Fus., 2 Cameronians, 1 Midd'x. R., 2 A. and S.H., 5th The Cameronians (from 19th November 1914).

*Royal Flying Corps.* . . . . Br.-Gen. Sir D. Henderson, K.C.B., D.S.O.  
H.Q. Wireless Unit; 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Aeroplane Squadrons (63 machines in all).

CAVALRY CORPS<sup>1</sup>

G.O.C. . . . . Lieut.-General E. H. H. Allenby, C.B.  
Colonel, G.S. . . . . Br.-General G. de S. Barrow.  
Br.-General, R.A. . . . . Br.-General B. F. Drake.

## 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION

G.O.C. . . . . Major-General H. de B. de Lisle, C.B., D.S.O.  
G.S.O. 1 . . . . . Lieut.-Colonel A. F. Home.

*1st Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . . Br.-General C. J. Briggs, C.B.  
2nd Dragoon Guards (The Queen's Bays);  
5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's) Dragoon Guards;  
11th (Prince Albert's Own) Hussars.  
1st Signal Troop.

*2nd Cavalry Brigade*<sup>2</sup>

G.O.C. . . . . Br.-General R. L. Mullens.  
4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards;  
9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers;  
18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars.  
2nd Signal Troop.

*Cavalry Divisional Troops*

*Artillery* . . . VII. Brigade R.H.A.,  
H and I Batteries;  
VII. Brigade Ammunition Column.  
*Engineers* . . . 1st Field Squadron R.E.  
*Signal Service* . . . 1st Signal Squadron.  
*A.S.C.* . . . . 1st Cavalry Divisional Supply Column.  
*Medical Units* . . . 1st and 3rd Cavalry Field Ambulances.

## 2ND CAVALRY DIVISION

G.O.C. . . . . Major-General H. de la P. Gough, C.B.  
G.S.O. 1 . . . . . Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Greenly, D.S.O.

<sup>1</sup> The Cavalry Corps was formed 9th October 1914; see Appendix 11.

<sup>2</sup> The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars joined the 2nd Cavalry Brigade on 31st October; was transferred to the 4th Cavalry Brigade (2nd Cavalry Division) on 11th November in place of the Composite Regiment, which was broken up.



*3rd Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . . Br.-General J. Vaughan, D.S.O.  
 4th (Queen's Own) Hussars ;  
 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers ;  
 16th (The Queen's) Lancers.  
 3rd Signal Troop.

*4th Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . . Br.-General Hon. C. E. Bingham,  
 C.V.O., C.B.  
 Composite Regiment of Household Cavalry ;<sup>1</sup>  
 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers) ;  
 3rd (King's Own) Hussars.  
 4th Signal Troop.

*5th Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . . Br.-General Sir P. W. Chetwode,  
 Bt., D.S.O.  
 2nd Dragoons (Royal Scots Greys) ;  
 12th (Prince of Wales's Royal) Lancers ;  
 20th Hussars.  
 5th Signal Troop.

*Cavalry Divisional Troops*

*Artillery* . . . . III. Brigade R.H.A.,  
 D, E and J Batteries ;  
 2nd Cavalry Divisional Ammunition Column.<sup>2</sup>  
*Engineers* . . . . 2nd Field Squadron R.E.  
*Signal Service* . . . . 2nd Signal Squadron.  
*A.S.C.* . . . . 2nd Cavalry Divisional Supply Column.  
*Medical Units* . . . . 2nd, 4th and 5th Cavalry Field Ambulances.

IV. CORPS<sup>3</sup>

G.O.C. . . . . Lieut.-General Sir H. S. Rawlin-  
 son, Bt., C.V.O., C.B.  
 Br.-General, G.S. . . . Br.-General R. A. K. Montgomery,  
 C.B., D.S.O.  
 Br.-General, R.A. . . . Br.-General A. H. Hussey.  
 Colonel, R.E. . . . Colonel R. U. H. Buckland, A.D.C.

<sup>1</sup> See note 2, p. 476.

<sup>2</sup> Composed of ammunition columns of III. Brigade R.H.A. and J Battery R.H.A.

<sup>3</sup> Originally formed, on 10th October, of the 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division. These formations were transferred to the I. Corps and Cavalry Corps on 27th and 25th October respectively. On 6th November the IV. Corps was reconstituted, of the 7th and 8th Divisions.

7TH DIVISION <sup>1</sup>

G.O.C. . . . .	Major-General T. Capper, C.B., D.S.O.
G.S.O. 1 . . . . .	Colonel H. M. de F. Montgomery.
C.R.A. . . . .	Br.-General H. K. Jackson, D.S.O.
C.R.E. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel A. T. Moore.

20th Brigade <sup>2</sup>

G.O.C. . . . .	Br.-General H. G. Ruggles-Brise, M.V.O. <sup>3</sup>
	1st Grenadier Guards ;
	2nd Scots Guards ;
	2nd The Border Regiment ;
	2nd The Gordon Highlanders.

## 21st Brigade

G.O.C. . . . .	Br.-General H. E. Watts, C.B.
	2nd The Bedfordshire Regiment ;
	2nd The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment) ;
	2nd The Royal Scots Fusiliers ;
	2nd The Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edin- burgh's).

22nd Brigade <sup>4</sup>

G.O.C. . . . .	Br.-General S. T. B. Lawford.
	2nd The Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regi- ment ;
	2nd The Royal Warwickshire Regiment ;
	1st The Royal Welch Fusiliers ;
	1st The South Staffordshire Regiment.

## Divisional Troops

<i>Mounted Troops</i> . . . . .	Northumberland Hussars. 7th Cyclist Company.
<i>Artillery</i> <sup>5</sup> . . . . .	XIV. Brigade R.H.A., C, F and T Batteries ; XIV. Brigade Ammunition Column. XXII. Brigade R.F.A., 104th, 105th and 106th Batteries ; XXII. Brigade Ammunition Column.

<sup>1</sup> Landed at Zeebrugge on 6th October ; placed under I. Corps on 27th October 1914.

<sup>2</sup> The 6th Gordon Highlanders joined the 20th Bde. on 5th December 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Wounded 2nd November ; succeeded by Br.-General F. J. Heyworth on 14th November 1914.

<sup>4</sup> The 8th Royal Scots joined the 22nd Inf. Bde. on 11th November 1914.

<sup>5</sup> C Battery was transferred to the 3rd Cav. Div. on 19th October ; T Battery joined the brigade, from Egypt, on 21st December 1914.

	XXXV. Brigade R.F.A.
	12th, 25th and 58th Batteries ;
	XXXV. Brigade Ammunition Column.
	III. (Heavy) Brigade R.G.A.
	111th and 112th (Heavy) Batteries (4·7-inch) ;
	Heavy Battery Ammunition Columns.
	7th Divisional Ammunition Column.
<i>Engineers</i> <sup>1</sup>	54th Field Company R.E.
	55th Field Company R.E.
<i>Signal Service</i>	7th Signal Company.
<i>A.S.C.</i>	7th Divisional Train.
<i>Medical Units</i>	21st, 22nd and 23rd Field Ambulances.

3RD CAVALRY DIVISION<sup>2</sup>

G.O.C.	Major-General Hon. J. H. G. Byng, C.B., M.V.O.
G.S.O. 1	Lieut.-Colonel M. F. Gage.
Commanding R.H.A.	Lieut.-Colonel C. H. de Rougement, M.V.O., D.S.O.

*6th Cavalry Brigade*<sup>3</sup>

G.O.C.	Br.-General E. Makins, D.S.O.
	3rd (Prince of Wales's) Dragoon Guards ;
	1st Royal Dragoons ;
	10th (Prince of Wales's Own Royal) Hussars.

*7th Cavalry Brigade*<sup>4</sup>

G.O.C.	Br.-General C. T. McM. Kavanagh, C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O.
	1st Life Guards ;
	2nd Life Guards ;
	Royal Horse Guards.

*Cavalry Divisional Troops*

<i>Artillery</i>	XV. Brigade R.H.A., <sup>5</sup> K Battery ; XV. Brigade Ammunition Column.
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<sup>1</sup> The 2nd Highland Field Company R.E. joined the division on 3rd January 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Landed at Zeebrugge on 7th October ; to Cavalry Corps on 25th October. The 8th Cavalry Brigade was formed on 20th November, under the command of Br.-General C. B. Bulkeley-Johnson, and consisted of the Royal Horse Guards, the 10th Royal Hussars and the Essex Yeomanry (joined 12th December).

<sup>3</sup> The 3rd Dragoon Guards, from Egypt, joined the brigade on 4th November ; the North Somerset Yeomanry joined on 13th November ; the 10th Hussars were transferred to the 8th Cavalry Brigade on 21st November. See note 2.

<sup>4</sup> The Leicestershire Yeomanry joined the brigade on 12th November ; the Royal Horse Guards were transferred to the 8th Cavalry Brigade on 20th November. See note 2.

<sup>5</sup> C Battery, from the 7th Division, joined the division on 10th October, and G Battery, from the 8th Division, on 25th November.



<i>Engineers</i>	. . .	3rd Field Squadron R.E. <sup>1</sup>
<i>Signal Service</i>	. . .	3rd Signal Squadron.
<i>A.S.C.</i>	. . .	3rd Cavalry Divisional Supply Column.
<i>Medical Units</i>	. . .	6th and 7th Cavalry Field Ambulances.

8TH DIVISION <sup>2</sup>

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Major-General F. J. Davies, C.B.
G.S.O. 1	. . . . .	Colonel W. H. Anderson.
C.R.A.	. . . . .	Br.-General A. E. A. Holland, M.V.O., D.S.O.
C.R.E.	. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Rotheram.

*23rd Brigade*

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Br.-General R. J. Pinney.
		2nd The Devonshire Regiment ;
		2nd (The Prince of Wales's Own) West York- shire Regiment ;
		2nd The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) ;
		2nd (Duke of Cambridge's Own) Middlesex Regi- ment.

*24th Brigade* <sup>3</sup>

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Br.-General F. C. Carter, C.B.
		1st The Worcestershire Regiment ;
		2nd The East Lancashire Regiment ;
		1st The Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) ;
		2nd The Northamptonshire Regiment.

*25th Brigade* <sup>4</sup>

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Br.-General A. W. G. Lowry Cole, C.B., D.S.O.
		2nd The Lincolnshire Regiment ;
		2nd (Princess Charlotte of Wales's) Royal Berk- shire Regiment ;
		1st The Royal Irish Rifles ;
		2nd The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own).

*Divisional Troops*

<i>Mounted Troops</i>	. . . . .	Northamptonshire Yeomanry. <sup>5</sup>
		8th Cyclist Company.
<i>Artillery</i> <sup>6</sup>	. . . . .	V. Brigade R.H.A., G, O and Z Batteries ; V. Brigade Ammunition Column.

<sup>1</sup> Landed at Boulogne 14th October ; joined 3rd Cavalry Division 19th October.

<sup>2</sup> Arrived France 6th November 1914.

<sup>3</sup> The 5th Black Watch joined the 24th Brigade on 13th November 1914.

<sup>4</sup> The 13th London Regiment joined the 25th Brigade on 13th November 1914.

<sup>5</sup> Joined 12th November 1914.

<sup>6</sup> G Battery was transferred to the 3rd Cavalry Division on 24th November, and its place taken, on 26th November, by 57th (How.) Battery R.F.A. from the 1st Division.

	XXXIII. Brigade R.F.A.,
	32nd, 33rd and 36th Batteries ;
	XXXIII. Brigade Ammunition Column.
	XLV. Brigade R.F.A.,
	1st, 3rd and 5th Batteries ;
	XLV. Brigade Ammunition Column.
	VIII. (Heavy) Brigade R.G.A.,
	118th and 119th Heavy Batteries R.G.A.
	(4·7-inch), and
	Heavy Battery Ammunition Columns.
	8th Divisional Ammunition Column.
<i>Engineers</i> <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	2nd Field Company R.E.
	15th Field Company R.E.
<i>Signal Service</i> . . . . .	8th Signal Company.
<i>A.S.C.</i> . . . . .	8th Divisional Train.
<i>Medical Units</i> . . . . .	24th, 25th and 26th Field Ambulances.

## HEAVY ARTILLERY

(See p. 164, footnote 1)

INDIAN CORPS <sup>2</sup>

G.O.C. . . . .	Lieut.-General Sir J. Willcocks,
	K.C.B., K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G.,
	D.S.O.
Br.-General, G.S. . . . .	Br.-General H. Hudson, C.B.,
	C.I.E.
Br.-General, R.A. . . . .	Br.-General H. F. Mercer, C.B.,
	A.D.C.
Colonel, R.E. . . . .	Colonel H. C. Nanton.

## THE LAHORE DIVISION

G.O.C. . . . .	Lieut.-General H. B. B. Watkis,
	C.B.
G.S.O. 1 . . . . .	Colonel T. E. O'Leary, C.B.
C.R.A. . . . .	Br.-General F. E. Johnson, D.S.O.
C.R.E. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel C. Coffin.

*The Ferozepore Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Br.-General R. G. Egerton, C.B.
	1st The Connaught Rangers ;
	9th Bhopal Infantry ;
	57th Wilde's Rifles (Frontier Force) ;
	129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis.

*The Jullundur Brigade* <sup>3</sup>

G.O.C. . . . .	Major-General P. M. Carnegie, C.B.
	1st The Manchester Regiment ;
	15th Ludhiana Sikhs ;
	47th Sikhs ;
	59th Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force).

<sup>1</sup> The 1st Home Counties Field Company R.E. joined the division on 24th December.<sup>2</sup> Disembarked at Marseilles 30th September 1914.<sup>3</sup> The 4th Suffolks joined the Jullundur Brigade on 4th December 1914.

*The Sirhind Brigade*<sup>1</sup>

G.O.C. . . . . Major-General J. M. S. Brunker.  
 1st The Highland Light Infantry ;  
 125th Napier's Rifles ;  
 1/1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles (The  
 Malaun Regiment) ;  
 1/4th Gurkha Rifles.

*Divisional Troops*

*Mounted Troops* . 15th Laneers (Cureton's Multanis).  
*Artillery* . . . . V. Brigade R.F.A.,<sup>2</sup>  
 64th, 73rd and 81st Batteries ;  
 V. Brigade Ammunition Column.  
 XI. Brigade R.F.A.,<sup>2</sup>  
 83rd, 84th and 85th Batteries ;  
 XI. Brigade Ammunition Column.  
 XVIII. Brigade R.F.A.,  
 59th, 93rd and 94th Batteries ;  
 XVIII. Brigade Ammunition Column.  
 109th Heavy Battery R.G.A. (4·7-inch), and  
 Heavy Battery Ammunition Column.  
 Lahore Divisional Ammunition Column.  
*Engineers* . . . . 20th Company 3rd Sappers and Miners ;  
 21st Company 3rd Sappers and Miners.  
*Signal Service* . . Lahore Signal Company.  
*Pioneers* . . . . 34th Sikh Pioneers.  
*S. & T.* . . . . Lahore Divisional Train.  
*Medical Units* . . 7th and 8th British Field Ambulances ;  
 111th, 112th and 113th Indian Field Ambulances.

## THE MEERUT DIVISION

G.O.C. . . . . Lieut.-General C. A. Anderson,  
 C.B.  
 G.S.O. 1 . . . . Colonel C. W. Jacob.  
 C.R.A. . . . . Br.-General A. B. Scott, C.B.,  
 D.S.O.  
 C.R.E. . . . . Lieut.-Colonel P. G. Twining,  
 M.V.O.

*The Dehra Dun Brigade*<sup>3</sup>

G.O.C. . . . . Br.-General C. E. Johnson.  
 1st The Seaforth Highlanders (Ross-shire Buffs,  
 The Duke of Albany's) ;  
 6th Jat Light Infantry ;  
 2/2nd King Edward's Own Gurkha Rifles (The  
 Sirmoor Rifles) ;  
 1/9th Gurkha Rifles.

<sup>1</sup> Arrived at Marseilles, from Egypt, 30th November ; joined Lahore Division 9th December 1914.

<sup>2</sup> The V. and XI. Brigades joined the Lahore Division on 22nd November 1914.

<sup>3</sup> The 4th Seaforth Highlanders joined the Dehra Dun Brigade on 18th December.



*The Garhwal Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Major-General H. D'U. Keary, C.B., D.S.O.
	2nd The Leicestershire Regiment ;
	1/39th Garhwal Rifles ;
	2/39th Garhwal Rifles ;
	2/3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles.

*The Bareilly Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Major-General F. Macbean, C.V.O., C.B.
	2nd The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) ;
	41st Dogras ;
	58th Vaughan's Rifles (Frontier Force) ;
	2/8th Gurkha Rifles.

*Divisional Troops*

<i>Mounted Troops</i> . . . . .	4th Cavalry.
<i>Artillery</i> <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	IV. Brigade R.F.A., 7th, 14th and 66th Batteries ; IV. Brigade Ammunition Column. IX. Brigade R.F.A., 19th, 20th and 28th Batteries ; IX. Brigade Ammunition Column. XIII. Brigade R.F.A., 2nd, 8th and 44th Batteries ; XIII. Brigade Ammunition Column. 110th Heavy Battery R.G.A., and Heavy Battery Ammunition Column. Meerut Divisional Ammunition Column.
<i>Engineers</i> . . . . .	3rd Company 1st King George's Own Sappers and Miners ; 4th Company 1st King George's Own Sappers and Miners.
<i>Signal Service</i> . . . . .	Meerut Signal Company.
<i>Pioneers</i> . . . . .	107th Pioneers.
<i>S. &amp; T.</i> . . . . .	Meerut Divisional Train.
<i>Medical Units</i> . . . . .	19th and 20th British Field Ambulances ; 128th, 129th and 130th Indian Field Ambulances.

*Note.*—The Secunderabad (Cavalry) Brigade, Signal Troop and Cavalry Field Ambulance, N Battery R.H.A. and H Section Ammunition Column, the 1st Indian Field Troop, and the Jodhpur Lancers and Jodhpur Cavalry Field Ambulance, were attached to the Indian Army Corps from 12th October 1914 until 23rd December 1914, when they joined the Indian Cavalry Corps.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The IV. and XIII. Brigades R.F.A. were allotted to the Meerut Division, in place of the V. and XI. Brigades, on 17th October 1914.

<sup>2</sup> See Order of Battle, Indian Cavalry Corps, p. 485 and notes 1 and 2.

## INDIAN CAVALRY CORPS

(formed 18th December 1914)

G.O.C. . . . .	Lieut.-General M. F. Rimington, C.V.O., C.B.
Br.-General, G.S. . . .	Br.-General H. J. M. Macandrew, D.S.O.
Br.-General, R.A. . . .	Br.-General R. St. C. Lecky.

## 1ST INDIAN CAVALRY DIVISION

(arrived France 7th November 1914)

G.O.C. . . . .	(1) Major-General M. F. Rimington, C.V.O., C.B. (2) Major-General H. D. Fanshawe, C.B. (22nd December 1914).
G.S.O. 1 . . . . .	(1) Lieut.-Colonel H. J. M. Macandrew, D.S.O. (2) Lieut.-Colonel R. O'B. Taylor, C.I.E. (26th December 1914).
Commanding R.H.A. . .	(1) Colonel R. St. C. Lecky. (2) Lieut.-Colonel H. Rouse, D.S.O. (11th December 1914).
C.R.E. . . . .	(1) Colonel C. E. Baddeley. (2) Lieut.-Colonel G. A. J. Leslie (11th December 1914).

*Sialkot Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Br.-General H. P. Leader, C.B. 17th (Duke of Cambridge's Own) Lancers ; 6th King Edward's Own Cavalry ; 19th Lancers (Fane's Horse). Signal Troop.
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*Ambala Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	Major-General C. P. W. Pirie. 8th (King's Royal Irish) Hussars ; 9th Hodson's Horse ; 30th Lancers (Gordon's Horse). Signal Troop.
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*Lucknow Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C. . . . .	(1) Major-General G. A. Cookson, C.B. (2) Br.-General W. H. Fasken (9th December 1914). 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards ; 29th Lancers (Deccan Horse) ; 36th Jacob's Horse. Signal Troop.
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*Cavalry Divisional Troops*

<i>Artillery</i> . . . . .	I. Indian Brigade R.H.A., A, Q and U Batteries ; I. Indian Brigade Ammunition Column (B, C and G Sections).
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<i>Engineers</i>	. . .	2nd Indian Field Troop.
<i>Signal Service</i>	. . .	2nd Indian Signal Squadron.
<i>S. &amp; T.</i>	. . .	1st Indian Cavalry Supply Column.
<i>Medical Units</i>	. . .	Sialkot, Ambala and Lucknow Cavalry Field Ambulances.

## 2ND INDIAN CAVALRY DIVISION

(arrived France 14th December 1914)

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Major-General G. A. Cookson, C.B.
G.S.O. 1	. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel L. C. Jones, M.V.O.
Commanding R.H.A.	. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel H. F. Askwith.
C.R.E.	. . . . .	Lieut.-Colonel H. J. M. Marshall.

*Mhow Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Col. M. E. Willoughby, C.M.G. (temp.).
		6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons ;
		2nd Lancers (Gardner's Horse) ;
		38th King George's Own Central India Horse.
		Signal Troop.

*Meerut Cavalry Brigade*

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Br.-General FitzJ. M. Edwards, D.S.O
		13th Hussars ;
		3rd Skinner's Horse ;
		18th King George's Own Lancers.
		Signal Troop.

*Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade*<sup>1</sup>

G.O.C.	. . . . .	Br.-General F. W. G. Wadeson.
		7th (Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards ;
		20th Deccan Horse ;
		34th Prince Albert Victor's Own Poona Horse.
		Signal Troop.

*Cavalry Divisional Troops*

<i>Artillery</i>	. . . . .	II. Indian Brigade R.H.A., N, <sup>2</sup> V and X Batteries ; II. Brigade Ammunition Column (E, F <sup>2</sup> and H <sup>2</sup> Sections).
<i>Engineers</i>	. . . . .	1st Indian Field Troop. <sup>2</sup>
<i>Signal Service</i>	. . . . .	3rd Indian Signal Squadron.
<i>S. &amp; T.</i>	. . . . .	2nd Indian Cavalry Supply Column.
<i>Medical Units</i>	. . . . .	Mhow, Meerut and Secunderabad <sup>2</sup> Cavalry Field Ambulances.

<sup>1</sup> Arrived France 12th October 1914 and attached Indian Corps ; to Indian Cavalry Corps 23rd December 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Went to France with Secunderabad Brigade. See also *Note*, p. 483.

<sup>3</sup> E and F Sections arrived from England 5th January 1915.



*Indian Cavalry Corps Troops*

<i>Cavalry</i>	. Jodhpur Lancers. <sup>1</sup>
<i>Signal Service</i>	. 1st Indian Signal Squadron.
<i>Medical Unit</i>	. Jodhpur Cavalry Field Ambulance. <sup>1</sup>

## APPENDIX 2.

## YEOMANRY

Regiment.	Date of arrival overseas.	Disposal.
Oxfordshire Hussars (Queen's Own).	22nd September 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops; to 2nd Cav. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., 31st October; to 4th Cav. Bde., 2nd Cav. Div., 11th November 1914.
Northumberland Hussars.	6th October 1914.	7th Divisional Troops.
Leicestershire Yeomanry (Prince Albert's Own).	3rd November 1914.	To 7th Cav. Bde., 3rd Cav. Div., 12th Nov- ember 1914.
North Somerset Yeomanry.	3rd November 1914.	To 6th Cav. Bde., 3rd Cav. Div., 13th Nov- ember 1914.
Northamptonshire Yeomanry.	4th November 1914.	8th Divisional Troops, 12th November 1914.
Essex Yeomanry .	1st December 1914.	To 8th Cav. Bde., 3rd Cav. Div., 12th Dec- ember 1914.
Surrey Yeomanry (Queen Mary's Regiment).	A Squad. 22nd December 1914. B Squad. 18th January 1915.	27th Divisional Troops. 28th Divisional Troops.

## APPENDIX 3.

## ROYAL ENGINEERS

SPECIAL RESERVE AND TERRITORIAL UNITS WHICH  
JOINED THE B.E.F. IN FRANCE IN 1914<sup>2</sup>

## SPECIAL RESERVE

1st Siege Company	. Royal Anglesey R.E.	3rd Nov. 1914
1st Siege Company	. Royal Monmouthshire R.E.	4th Nov. 1914

<sup>1</sup> Went to France with Secunderabad Brigade. See also *Note*, p. 483.<sup>2</sup> In addition 3 Territorial Field Companies accompanied the 27th Division to France on 20th December 1914: 1st South Midland and 1st and 2nd Wessex.

2nd Railway Company .	Royal Monmouthshire R.E.	10th Nov. 1914
3rd Railway Company .	Royal Anglesey R.E.	11th Nov. 1914
2nd Siege Company .	Royal Anglesey R.E.	11th Nov. 1914
4th Siege Company .	Royal Monmouthshire R.E.	14th Nov. 1914

## TERRITORIAL

Cheshire Field Company . . .	(to 3rd Division)	10th Dec. 1914
1st London Field Company . . .	(to 6th Division)	11th Dec. 1914
1st Lowland Field Company . . .	(to 1st Division)	14th Dec. 1914
1st East Anglian Field Company . . .	(to 2nd Division)	24th Dec. 1914
1st Home Counties Field Company . . . . .	(to 8th Division)	24th Dec. 1914
2nd Home Counties Field Company . . . . .	(to 5th Division)	24th Dec. 1914
1st (The St. Helens) West Lancashire Field Company . . . . .	(to 4th Division)	1st Jan. 1915
2nd Highland Field Company . . . . .	(to 7th Division)	3rd Jan. 1915

## APPENDIX 4.

## INFANTRY

## (TERRITORIAL FORCE BATTALIONS)

Regiment.	Date of arrival in France.	Disposal.
14th London Regiment (London Scottish).	16th September 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops, then to 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 7th November 1914.
1st Honourable Artillery Company.	20th September 1914.	L. of C. Troops, then to 8th Brigade, 3rd Division, 9th November 1914.
5th Border Regiment.	26th October 1914.	L. of C. till May 1915.
28th London Regiment (Artists Rifles).	28th October 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops.
6th Welch Regiment	29th October 1914.	L. of C., then to 84th Brigade, 28th Division, 28th July 1915.
5th Black Watch .	2nd November 1914.	To 24th Brigade, 8th Division, 13th November 1914.
10th The King's (Liverpool Regiment).	3rd November 1914.	To 9th Brigade, 3rd Division, 25th November 1914.
16th London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles).	3rd November 1914.	To 18th Brigade, 6th Division, 11th November 1914.

13th London Regiment (Princess Louise's Kensington Battalion).	4th November 1914.	To 25th Brigade, 8th Division, 13th November 1914.
8th Royal Scots .	5th November 1914.	To 22nd Brigade, 7th Division, 11th November 1914.
9th Highland Light Infantry.	5th November 1914.	To 5th Brigade, 2nd Division, 24th November 1914.
5th The Cameronians	5th November 1914.	To 19th Brigade, 19th November 1914.
5th London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade).	5th November 1914.	To 11th Brigade, 4th Division, 19th November 1914.
9th London Regiment (Queen Victoria's Rifles).	5th November 1914.	To 13th Brigade, 5th Division, 27th November 1914.
4th Royal Welch Fusiliers.	6th November 1914.	To 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 7th December 1914.
2nd Monmouthshire Regiment.	6th November 1914.	To 12th Brigade, 4th Division, 21st December 1914.
1st Hertfordshire Regiment.	6th November 1914.	To 4th (Guards) Brigade, 2nd Division, 19th November 1914.
4th Seaforth Highlanders.	7th November 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops, then to Dehra Dun Brigade, Meerut Division, 18th December 1914.
4th Suffolk Regiment.	9th November 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops, then to Jullundur Brigade, Lahore Division, 4th December 1914.
6th Cheshire Regiment.	10th November 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops, then to 15th Brigade, 5th Division, 11th December 1914.
6th Gordon Highlanders.	10th November 1914.	G.H.Q. Troops, then to 20th Brigade, 7th Division, 5th December 1914.
7th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders.	16th December 1914.	To 10th Brigade, 4th Division, 6th January 1915.
12th London Regiment (The Rangers).	25th December 1914.	L. of C., then to 84th Brigade, 28th Division, 2nd February 1915.



## ORDER OF BATTLE

OF THE

## DÉTACHEMENT D'ARMÉE DE BELGIQUE

ON 11TH NOVEMBER 1914

Commander . . . . .	General d'Urbal.
<i>IX. Corps</i> . . . . .	General Dubois.
<i>17th Division</i> . . . . .	General Guignabaudet.
33rd Brigade . . . . .	General Moussy.
34th Brigade . . . . .	General Briant.
304th Brigade . . . . .	General Dumay.
<i>18th Division</i> . . . . .	General Lefevre.
35th Brigade . . . . .	General Kopp.
36th Brigade . . . . .	General Lestoquois.
<i>6th Cavalry Division</i> . . . . .	General Réquichot.
5th (Cuirassier) Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Bertoli (previously Maison-Rouge).
6th (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	General Laperrine.
6th (Light) Brigade . . . . .	General Morel.
<i>7th Cavalry Division</i> . . . . .	General Hély d'Oissel.
6th (Cuirassier) Brigade . . . . .	General Taufflieb.
1st (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Zeude.
7th (Light) Brigade . . . . .	General de Bersaucourt.
<i>XVI. Corps</i> . . . . .	General Grossetti.
<i>32nd Division</i> . . . . .	General Bouchez.
63rd Brigade . . . . .	Colonel de Woillemont.
64th Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Magnan.
<i>43rd Division</i> . . . . .	General Lanquetot.
85th Brigade . . . . .	General Guillemat.
86th Brigade . . . . .	General Olleris.
<i>39th Division (from XX. Corps)</i> . . . . .	General Dantant.
77th Brigade . . . . .	General Wirbel.
78th Brigade . . . . .	General Gérome.

<i>31st Division</i> . . . . .	General Vidal.
61st Brigade . . . . .	General Bernard.
62nd Brigade . . . . .	General Xardel.
XXXII. Corps . . . . .	General Humbert.
<i>38th Division</i> . . . . .	General Muteau.
75th Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Vuillemin.
76th Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Vallet.
<i>42nd Division</i> . . . . .	General Duchesne.
83rd Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Claudon.
84th Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Deville.
<i>89th (Territorial) Division</i> . . . . .	General Boucher.
177th Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Vandenberg.
178th Brigade . . . . .	Colonel de Perey.
<i>4th Cavalry Division</i> . . . . .	General de Buyer.
3rd (Cuirassier) Brigade . . . . .	General de Monpoly.
4th (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	General Dodelier.
4th (Light) Brigade . . . . .	General de Boissieu.
<i>Marine Fusilier Brigade</i> . . . . .	Admiral Ronare'h.
XX. Corps . . . . .	General Balfourier.
<i>11th Division</i> . . . . .	General Ferry.
21st Brigade <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	Colonel Aimé.
22nd Brigade <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	General de Lobit.
<i>39th Division</i> . . . . .	(lent to XVI. Corps).
<i>26th Division</i> . . . . .	General Hallouin.
51st Brigade . . . . .	General Delaporte.
52nd Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Dubois.
II. Cavalry Corps . . . . .	General de Mitry.
<i>87th (Territorial) Division</i> . . . . .	General Roy (previously Bidon).
173rd Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Conte.
174th Brigade . . . . .	General Couillaud.
<i>5th Cavalry Division</i> . . . . .	General Allenou.
3rd (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Robillot.
7th (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	Colonel Hennocque.
5th (Light) Brigade . . . . .	General de Cornulier Lucinière.
<i>9th Cavalry Division</i> . . . . .	General de l'Espée.
1st (Cuirassier) Brigade . . . . .	General Gendron.
9th (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	General de Sully.
16th (Dragoon) Brigade . . . . .	General de Sereville.

<sup>1</sup> Lent to XVI. Corps.<sup>2</sup> Lent to II. Cavalry Corps.

<i>I. Cavalry Corps</i>	.	General Conneau.
<i>1st Cavalry Division</i>	. . .	General Mazel.
2nd (Cuirassier) Brigade	.	General Louvat.
5th (Dragoon) Brigade	.	Colonel Feraud.
11th (Dragoon) Brigade	.	General Corvisart.
<i>3rd Cavalry Division</i>	. . .	General de Lastours.
4th (Cuirassier) Brigade	.	Colonel Gouzil.
13th (Dragoon) Brigade	.	General Leorat.
3rd (Light) Brigade	.	General de Villestreux.
<i>10th Cavalry Division</i>	. . .	General de Contades.
10th (Dragoon) Brigade	.	General Champvallier.
15th (Dragoon) Brigade	.	General Grellet.



## ORDER OF BATTLE

OF THE

GERMAN ARMY IN FLANDERS <sup>1</sup>

## FOURTH ARMY

(10th October–16th November 1914.)

Commander . . . . General Duke Albrecht of Württemberg.  
 Chief of the Staff . . . Major-General Ilse.

## III. Reserve Corps (General von Beseler) :

- 5th Reserve Division,
  - 9th Reserve Brigade,
    - 4th and 48th Reserve Regiments.
  - 10th Reserve Brigade,
    - 12th and 52nd Reserve Regiments.
- 6th Reserve Division,
  - 11th Reserve Brigade,
    - 25th and 35th Reserve Regiments.
  - 12th Reserve Brigade,
    - 24th and 26th Reserve Regiments.
- 4th *Ersatz* Division,
  - 9th *Ersatz* Brigade,
    - 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Brandenburg *Ersatz*  
Battalions.
  - 13th *Ersatz* Brigade,
    - 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Brandenburg *Ersatz*  
Battalions.
  - 33rd *Ersatz* Brigade,
    - 34th, 35th, 36th and 81st Brandenburg *Ersatz*  
Battalions.

## XXII. Reserve Corps (General von Falkenhayn) :

- 43rd Reserve Division,
  - 201st, 202nd, 203rd and 204th Reserve Regiments,
  - 15th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

<sup>1</sup> The infantry formations and units, except Active *Jäger*, are given in detail for identification purposes. Each corps had as a rule at least one *Jäger* battalion.

44th Reserve Division,  
205th, 206th, 207th and 208th Reserve Regiments,  
16th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

XXIII. Reserve Corps (General von Kleist) :

45th Reserve Division,  
209th, 210th, 211th and 212th Reserve Regiments,  
17th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

46th Reserve Division,  
213th, 214th, 215th and 216th Reserve Regiments,  
18th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

XXVI. Reserve Corps (General von Hügel) :

51st Reserve Division,  
233rd, 234th, 235th and 236th Reserve Regiments,  
23rd Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

52nd Reserve Division,  
237th, 238th, 239th and 245th Reserve Regiments,  
24th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

XXVII. Reserve Corps (Lieut.-General von Carlowitz; from 27th  
October, General von Schubert) :

53rd Reserve Division (Saxon),  
241st, 242nd, 243rd and 244th Reserve Regiments,  
25th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

54th Reserve Division (Württemberg),  
245th, 246th, 247th and 248th Reserve Regiments,  
26th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

*Attached at various times :*

9th Reserve Division,  
17th Reserve Brigade,  
7th and 19th Reserve Regiments  
18th Reserve Brigade,  
6th and 47th Reserve Regiments.  
5th Reserve *Jäger* Battalion.

6th Bavarian Reserve Division (see XIV. Reserve Corps).

Marine Division,

1st Marine Brigade,  
1st *Matrosen* and 1st Marine Regiments.  
2nd Marine Brigade,  
2nd *Matrosen* and 2nd Marine Regiments.  
37th *Landwehr* Brigade (mixed),  
73rd and 74th *Landwehr* Regiments.  
38th *Landwehr* Brigade (mixed),  
77th and 78th *Landwehr* Regiments.  
2nd *Ersatz* Brigade,  
1st and 2nd *Ersatz* Regiments.

## SIXTH ARMY

(Portion opposite the B.E.F.)

Commander . . . . Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.  
 Chief of the Staff . . . Major-General von Delmensingen.

## II. Corps (General von Linsingen) :

3rd Division,  
 5th Brigade,  
 2nd and 9th Grenadier Regiments.  
 6th Brigade,  
 34th Fusilier and 42nd Regiments.  
 4th Division,  
 7th Brigade,  
 14th and 149th Regiments.  
 8th Brigade,  
 49th and 140th Regiments.

## VII. Corps (General von Claer) :

13th Division,  
 25th Brigade,  
 13th and 158th Regiments.  
 26th Brigade,  
 15th and 55th Regiments.  
 14th Division,  
 27th Brigade,  
 16th and 53rd Regiments.  
 79th Brigade,  
 56th and 57th Regiments.

## XIII. Corps (General von Fabeck) :

26th Division,  
 51st Brigade,  
 119th Grenadier and 125th Regiments.  
 52nd Brigade,  
 121st and 122nd Fusilier Regiments.  
 25th Reserve Division,  
 49th Reserve Brigade,  
 116th and 118th Reserve Regiments.  
 50th Reserve Brigade,  
 83rd Reserve and 168th Regiments.

## XIX. (Saxon) Corps (General von Laffert) :

24th Division,  
 47th Brigade,  
 139th and 179th Regiments.  
 48th Infantry Brigade,  
 106th and 107th Regiments.



40th Division,  
 88th Brigade,  
 104th and 181st Regiments.  
 89th Brigade,  
 133rd and 134th Regiments.

XIV. Reserve Corps (General von Loden) :

26th Reserve Division,  
 51st Reserve Brigade,  
 180th Regiment and 119th and 99th Reserve Regi-  
 ments.  
 52nd Reserve Brigade,  
 120th and 121st Reserve Regiments.  
 6th Bavarian Reserve Division,  
 12th Bavarian Reserve Brigade,  
 16th and 17th Bavarian Reserve Regiments.  
 14th Bavarian Reserve Brigade,  
 20th, 21st and 9th Bavarian Reserve Regiments.

ARMY GROUP FABECK

(27th October–20th November 1914.)

XV. Corps (General von Deimling) :

30th Division,  
 60th Brigade,  
 99th and 143rd Regiments.  
 85th Brigade,  
 105th and 136th Regiments.  
 39th Division,  
 61st Brigade,  
 126th and 132nd Regiments.  
 82nd Brigade,  
 171st and 172nd Regiments.

II. Bavarian Corps (General von Martini) :

3rd Bavarian Division,  
 5th Bavarian Brigade,  
 22nd and 23rd Bavarian Regiments.  
 6th Bavarian Brigade,  
 17th and 18th Bavarian Regiments.  
 4th Bavarian Division,  
 7th Bavarian Brigade,  
 5th and 9th Bavarian Regiments.  
 5th Bavarian Reserve Brigade,  
 5th and 8th Bavarian Reserve Regiments.

26th Division (see XIII. Corps).

GROUP GEROK

6th Bavarian Reserve Division (see XIV. Reserve Corps) ;  
 3rd Division ( „ II. Corps) ;  
 25th Reserve Division ( „ XIII. Corps) ;  
 11th *Landwehr* Brigade.

ARMY GROUP LINSINGEN  
(8th-18th November 1914.)

XV. Corps (see Army Group Fabeck).

Plettenberg's Corps :

4th Division (see II. Corps).

Winckler's Composite Guard Division :

2nd Guard Brigade,

2nd and 4th Foot Guard Regiments.

4th Guard Brigade,

2nd and 4th Guard Grenadier Regiments.

CAVALRY

(As organized 20th October 1914.<sup>1</sup>)

I. Cavalry Corps (Lieut.-General von Richthofen) :

Guard Cavalry Division . (Major-General von Etzel) ;

4th Cavalry Division . (Lieut.-General von Garnier).

II. Cavalry Corps (General von der Marwitz) :

2nd Cavalry Division . (Major-General Thumb von Neu-  
burg) ;

7th „ „ . (Lieut.-General von Heydebreck).

IV. Cavalry Corps (Lieut.-General von Hollen) :

6th Cavalry Division . (Lieut.-General Egon von Smet-  
tow) ;

9th „ „ . (Major - General Eberhard von  
Smettow).

V. Cavalry Corps (Lieut.-General von Stetten) :

3rd Cavalry Division . (Lieut.-General von Unger) ;

Bavarian Cavalry Division (Lieut.-General von Wenniger).

*Note.*—A German Cavalry division consisted of—

3 cavalry brigades each of two regiments,

1 horse artillery group,

1 machine-gun squadron,

1 wireless signal section,

1 engineer detachment,

1 or 2 *Jäger* battalions.

<sup>1</sup> The reorganizations from time to time are given in footnotes in the text.

## APPENDIX 7.

TEXT OF THE PUBLIC NOTICE, CALLING  
TO ARMS 100,000 MEN; 7TH AUGUST 1914

## YOUR KING AND COUNTRY NEED YOU

## A CALL TO ARMS

An addition of 100,000 men to his Majesty's Regular Army is immediately necessary in the present grave National Emergency.

Lord Kitchener is confident that this appeal will be at once responded to by all those who have the safety of our Empire at heart.

## TERMS OF SERVICE

General Service for a period of 3 years or until the war is concluded.

Age of Enlistment between 19 and 30.

## HOW TO JOIN

Full information can be obtained at any Post Office in the Kingdom or at any Military depot.

GOD SAVE THE KING!

## APPENDIX 8.

*Secret.*

## INSTRUCTIONS

BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO MAJOR-GENERAL  
SIR HENRY RAWLINSON, BT., C.V.O., C.B.

1. You are placed in command of the British Forces, the com- **Map 1.**  
position of which is shewn on the attached table, with a view to  
assisting and supporting the Belgian Army defending Antwerp,  
which place is besieged by the Germans.

2. Secrecy as far as possible should be aimed at; your troops  
should, if possible, be moved at night, and every endeavour should  
be made to escape detection by hostile aircraft.

You should endeavour to act on the left flank of the German  
Army investing Antwerp, and your attack should, if possible, come  
as a surprise to the Germans.

3. A vigorous offensive of the combined British, French and  
Belgian forces against the Germans should compel them to retire  
and possibly place the heavy artillery with which they have been  
bombarding the forts of Antwerp in jeopardy.

As soon as these guns have been taken or silenced the future



of Antwerp is safe and the object of the expedition of your force will have been obtained.

4. A French division, together with a French Fusilier marine brigade 8,000 strong, and some cavalry, will be associated with you in these operations as soon as they arrive.

The German forces besieging Antwerp are reported to be 4 or 4½ divisions, not of first line troops.

The Belgian Field Army, who have been up to the present successfully holding them in check, consist of about 60,000 men.

KITCHENER.

War Office.

5th October 1914.

*Secret.*

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE FOR THE RELIEF  
OF ANTWERP

Unit.	Strength.			Port of Dis-embarkation.	Date of Dis-embarkation.
	Men.	Horses.	Guns.		
<b>BRITISH FORCE.</b>					
7th Division . . . . . (Maj.-Gen. T. Capper, C.B., D.S.O.)	17,948	5,508	63 [sic]	Zeebrugge	6th October
3rd Cavalry Division . . . . . (Maj.-Gen. Hon. J. Byng, C.B., M.V.O.)	3,994	4,072	6	"	7th "
Naval Detachment . . . . . (Br.-Gen. Sir G. Aston, K.C.B.)	8,000	..	..	..	Arrived
Heavy Artillery—					
Naval . . . . .	70	..	{ 6-4-7-inch 6-6 -inch 2-9-2-inch	.. .. ..	Arrived Arrived Left England 1.10.14
From Army . . . . .	167	..	{ 1-9-2-inch 1-9-2 How. 2-6 -inch	.. .. ..	Left England 3.10.14 Departure delayed Left England 4.10.14
<b>Total British Force</b>	<b>30,179</b>	<b>9,580</b>	<b>87</b>		
<b>FRENCH FORCE.</b>					
87th Territorial Division (General Roy)	15,000	..	24	Ostend	6th to 9th October
2 squadrons . . . . .	332	380	..	"	
Fusilier Marine Bde. (Rear-Admiral Ron- arc'h)	6,000	..	..	"	
2 Regt. Marines . . . . .	2,000	..	..	"	
1 Regt. Zouaves . . . . .	260	..	16 (machine guns)	"	8th October
<b>Total French Force</b>	<b>23,592</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>40</b>		
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>53,771</b>	<b>9,960</b>	<b>127</b>		

## APPENDIX 9.

War Office,  
Whitehall.  
4th October 1914.

Instructions to General Capper  
Commanding 7th Division.

1. You will proceed with your division and disembark at Zeebrugge **Map 1.** with a view to assisting and supporting the Belgian Army defending Antwerp, which place is being besieged by the Germans.
2. A French division, together with a French Fusilier Marine brigade, the latter 6,000 strong, and some cavalry will be associated with you in these operations as soon as they arrive.
3. The German forces besieging Antwerp are reported to be 4 or 4½ divisions not of first line troops.
4. The Belgian Field Army who have been up to the present successfully holding them in check consist of about 60,000 men.
5. A vigorous offensive of the combined above force against the Germans should force them to retire and possibly place the heavy artillery with which they have been bombarding the forts of Antwerp in jeopardy.
6. As soon as these guns have been taken or silenced the future of Antwerp is safe and the object of the expedition of your force will have been obtained.

## APPENDIX 10.

## OPERATION ORDER No. 32

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

College Courbet,  
Abbeville.

8th October 1914.

1. The enemy is in contact with French troops on the general line **Map 6.** Albert [20 miles S.S.W. of Arras]—Arras—Lens—Lille. His cavalry are on the line Lille—Poperinghe. The line Armentières—Aire—St. Omer is held by the French.
2. The II. Corps will reach the line Anvin (5 m. N.W. of St. Pol)—Fruges,<sup>1</sup> with heads of columns on the evening of 9th October,

<sup>1</sup> Marked with an asterisk "See back" in original. On the back of the order is the following note :—

"This line was subsequently altered by verbal arrangement to the line "Blangy sur Ternoise—Maisoncelle—Planques. At the same time 2nd "Cav. Div. was ordered to reach Anvin on 9th.

"H. WAKE, Major, G.S."

covered on the North by the 2nd Cavalry Division which will act under the orders of the G.O.C. II. Corps.

The 1st Cavalry Division will reach Frevent on 9th October and billet about there.

3. Railheads for supplies 9th Oct.:—
- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| II. Corps                                | Ponthoile Romaine.           |
| G.H.Q.                                   | } Abbeville (Port le Grand). |
| R.F.C.                                   |                              |
| L. of C. Units with G.H.Q.<br>and R.F.C. |                              |
4. Reports to Abbeville.

A. J. MURRAY, Lt.-Gen.  
C.G.S.

## APPENDIX 11.

Copy No. 6.

O (a) 383.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C. CAVALRY CORPS

- Map 6. 1. The 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions have been combined into a Cavalry Corps under the command of Major-General E. H. H. Allenby, C.B.
2. A division of this corps will reach the line Guarbecque—Aire to-morrow.
3. The Cavalry Corps has for its mission the following objectives :—
- (i) It will reconnoitre towards Merville and the Nieppe Wood and make good the line Merville—Hazebrouck. The general line will then be along the line of the Bourre from Merville to Hazebrouck.
  - (ii) Having made good the Merville—Hazebrouck line the high ground about Le Mont Noir—Berthen—Le Mont des Cats will be secured. Touch will be gained with the French troops on the left.
  - (iii) The line of the Canal Wervicq—Ypres will be made good.

A. J. MURRAY, Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

3.45 P.M.

9th October 1914.



## APPENDIX 12.

Copy No. 5.

*Secret.*

## ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 33

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

General Headquarters,  
10th October 1914.

1. The situation in front of the British Army is unchanged. Map 6.
2. It is the intention of the Commander-in-Chief to advance to meet the enemy, prolonging the French left.
3. The II. Corps will advance to the line Béthune (inclusive) to Busnes and from this line it will occupy the line of the canal and gain touch with the left of the French.  
The Cavalry Corps will detail a cavalry regiment to be placed under orders of II. Corps.  
The Cavalry Corps will continue the line to the left from Busnes to Aire (inclusive); and will then act in accordance with the instructions already issued on 9th October, keeping touch with, and supporting the left of, the II. Corps.  
The III. Corps will continue its detraining at St. Omer and will reconnoitre towards Hazebrouek.  
The IV. Corps (at present consisting of the 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division) have received separate instructions.
4. Supply Railheads for 11th October 1914 :—
 

Cavalry Corps	. . .	Blangy sur Ternoise.
II. Corps	. . .	Wavrans (1½ miles S.E. of Anvin). <sup>1</sup>
G.H.Q.	}	. . . Abbeville.
L. of C.		
R.F.C.		
Ammunition Railhead		Auchy les Hesdin.
5. Reports to Abbeville.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Issued at 7.30 P.M.

<sup>1</sup> Wavrans is 3 miles S.E. of Anvin.

## APPENDIX 13.

Copy No. 5.

*Secret.*

## ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 34

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

General Headquarters,  
11th October 1914.

- Map 6. 1. The enemy's advanced cavalry appear to have fallen back.
2. It is the C.-in-C.'s intention to follow the enemy to-morrow with a view to bringing him to action.
3. The Cavalry Corps, after having made good the line Merville—Hazebrouck, will secure the high ground about Le Mont Noir—Berthen—Le Mont des Cats.

The II. Corps will advance to the line Lorgies—Estaires (exclusive) keeping their right in touch with the left of the French.

The III. Corps will move by road and rail to Hazebrouck and will take up a position covering it from the east and north. Hazebrouck will be secured at the earliest possible moment so that detraining may take place there and at stations to the west. Movements commence at 5 A.M.

- 4 Supply Railheads for 12th October 1914 :—
- |                     |         |  |
|---------------------|---------|--|
| Cavalry Corps       | . . .   | Blangy sur Ternoise.                           |
| II. Corps           | . . .   | Wavrans (1½ miles S.E. of Anvin). <sup>1</sup> |
| III. Corps          | . . .   | Lumbres.                                       |
| G.H.Q.              | } . . . | Abbeville.                                     |
| L. of C.            |         |  |
| R.F.C.              |         |  |
| Ammunition Railhead |         | Auchy les Hesdin.                              |
5. Reports to Abbeville.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Issued at 9 P.M.

<sup>1</sup> Wavrans is 3 miles S.E. of Anvin.

## APPENDIX 14.

*Secret.*

Copy No. 5.

## ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 35

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

General Headquarters,  
12th October 1914.

1. The French were to-day driven out of Vermelles [C 11].<sup>1</sup>  
The II. Corps is attacking the enemy on the French left flank.
2. It is the Commander-in-Chief's intention to continue the advance passing the Army to the north of Lille and driving the enemy before it.

Map 1, and  
for places  
marked \*,  
west and  
south of St.  
Pol, Map 6.

3. Objective of II. Corps will be the line Capinghem [D 10]—Le Bizet [D 9] (inclusive).

Objective of III. Corps will be the line Le Bizet (exclusive)—Wyttschaete [D 9] (inclusive).

Objective of Cavalry Corps will be the line Wervicq [E 9]—Ypres.

The moves of II. and III. Corps will be contingent on the II. Corps enabling the French left to join in the advance.

Should the II. Corps require assistance the III. Corps will at once render it, but the lines of advance laid down above will be resumed as soon as possible.

4. Railheads for supplies for 13th October 1914 :—

Cavalry Corps . . .	Wardrecques [A 9].
II. Corps . . .	Pernes [A 11], Camblain [2½ miles E. of Pernes].
III. Corps . . .	Lumbres.*
G.H.Q. } . . .	Abbeville.*
L. of C. } . . .	
R.F.C. . . .	Lumbres.*

Ammunition Railhead Wavrans (3 miles N.W. of St. Pol).\*

5. Reports to Abbeville \* until 10 A.M., after that hour to St. Omer.\*

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Issued at 7.30 P.M.

<sup>1</sup> References given in square brackets in this and the following Operation Orders are to Map 1. This map combines, on the scale of 1/250,000, portions of the 1/80,000 Map for France and the 1/100,000 Map for Belgium which were used by the B.E.F. at this time.



## APPENDIX 15.

addressed  
4th and 6th Divisions  
repeated  
Cavalry Corps  
and II. Corps  
G. 67. 13th October.

Map 1. (1) The enemy is reported to be holding a line extending from Neuf Berquin [B 10] through Bleu [B 9]—Outtersteene<sup>1</sup> [C 9]—Bailleul S.O. [1 mile N. of Outtersteene]—Meteren [C 9]—Fontaine Houck [1½ miles N. of Meteren]—Berthen [C 9].

(2) The III. Corps will attack this line as soon as it can be assembled and deployed.

The 4th Division will attack Meteren and the ridge running due north from the village.

The 6th Division, less 19th Infantry Brigade, will attack Bailleul S.O. and Outtersteene.

(3) The 19th Infantry Brigade will remain as a corps reserve between Strazeele and Pradelles [both B 9].

(4) The Cavalry Corps has been asked to co-operate by attacking Berthen.

(5) The attack will be timed by the movements of 4th Division which will probably be in a position to advance from Fletre [B 9] at 1 P.M.

C. H. HARRINGTON, Major G.S.

III. Corps  
11-15 A.M.

## APPENDIX 16.

## OPERATION ORDER No. 5

BY

BR.-GENERAL H. F. M. WILSON

Commanding 4th Division

Rouge Croix.  
13.10.14.

Map 1. 1. (a) The enemy strength unknown are entrenched on the line Vieux Berquin [B 9]—Bailleul S.O.—Meteren—Fontaine Houck [1½ miles N. of Meteren]—Berthen [C 9].

(b) The 2nd Cavalry Division is on our left. Headquarters at the Monastery ½ mile S.E. of Le Mt. des Cats [1¾ miles W.N.W. of Berthen]. The 6th Division is on our right.

2. The III. Corps is to attack at 1.30 P.M. The G.O.C. intends to attack the position from Meteren (inclusive) to Fontaine Houck (inclusive). The Cavalry Corps has been asked to

<sup>1</sup> "Oultersteene" on Map 1.

co-operate by attacking Berthen. This attack has commenced.

3. (a) The 12th Brigade will attack the position from Meteren (inclusive) to Point 62 (inclusive) [ $\frac{1}{2}$  mile N.E. of Meteren]. The 10th Infantry Brigade from Point 62 (exclusive) to Fontaine Houck (inclusive). The 11th Infantry Brigade will be in Divisional Reserve at Fletre.
  - (b) Line of demarcation between brigades, a line from Point 62 to Le Beurre [ $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles W. of Point 62]. Advanced troops will cross the line first E of Fletre, X of Courte Croix [ $\frac{3}{4}$  mile S.E. of Fletre] at 1.30 P.M.
  - (c) The Divisional Artillery will come under the orders of Divisional Artillery Commander. 29th F.A.B. will support and supply S.A.A. to 12th Infantry Brigade from north slopes of Klite Hill [ $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles E. of Pradelles, B 9]. 32nd F.A.B. will support 10th Infantry Brigade from N.W. of Fletre advancing if necessary to Hill 1,500 yards E. of that village. 14 F.A.B. will also support and supply S.A.A. to 10th Infantry Brigade on the left of 32nd F.A.B. 37 F.A.B. will be distributed. 31 (H) Battery R.G.A. will assemble at Rouge Croix [ $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles S.E. of Fletre].
  - (d) 7th and 9th Field Companies R.E. will join Divisional Reserve at Fletre.
  - (e) The Cavalry Squadron and Cyclist Company (less 1 platoon to report to Divisional Headquarters) will cover the left flank of the 10th Brigade and will report the progress and movements of the 2nd Cavalry Division.
4. 4th Divisional Ammunition Column is advancing to Le Nieppe [A 9].
  5. Divisional Collecting Station Rouge Croix.
  6. Divisional Headquarters will be at Fletre after 1.30 P.M.

A. A. MONTGOMERY, Lt.-Col.,  
General Staff, 4th Division.

Issued at 1.15 P.M.

## APPENDIX 17.

### OPERATION ORDER No. 13

6th Division

Pradelles.

13th Oct. 1914.

1. The enemy is holding the line Les 3 Fermes [2 miles E.N.E. Map 1. of Vieux Berquin]—Bailleul S.O.—Meteren—Les 4 Fis Aymon [1 mile N. of Meteren]. He also holds Bleu one mile E. of Vieux Berquin and a line S. of that place to Neuf Berquin.

2. The III. Corps will attack, in co-operation with the Cavalry Corps, to the north.

3. The Advanced Guard, reinforced by the Leinster Regt., will attack the Outtersteene—Bailleul S.O. Ridge with its right on the railway and its left in touch with the 4th Division.

The right column (18th Infantry Brigade with attached troops) will attack Bleu and Les 3 Fermes with its left on the railway.

Both these attacks will commence at 1.30 P.M. The Royal Fusiliers will remain in Divisional Reserve at Strazeele [B 9]. The 19th Infantry Brigade will remain in Corps Reserve in its present position N. of Strazeele.

The 12th and 24th Brigades R.F.A. will support the attack from positions on the Strazeele plateau, 24th Brigade S. of 12th Brigade.

The 2nd Brigade R.F.A. and Heavy Battery will remain in Divisional Reserve at Pradelles.

12th Field Company R.E. will remain in Strazeele for the present.

4. A dressing station will be established at Pradelles.

5. The train will remain in Hazebrouck for the present.

6. Reports to west end of Pradelles.

W. T. FURSE, Colonel.  
General Staff, 6th Division.

Issued through Signal Service at 12 noon.

## APPENDIX 18.

II. Corps. Cavalry Corps.

III. Corps. R.F.C.

IV. Corps.

O.A. 476. 14th October.

Map 1. The Cavalry Corps will reconnoitre line of River Lys from Estaires [C 10] to Menin [E 8/9]. C.-in-C. will meet G.O.C.'s III., IV. and Cavalry Corps at noon at the headquarters of III. Corps where reports will be rendered and whence orders will be issued for the continuance of the advance. The II. Corps will continue to press the enemy. Separate orders are being issued to that corps. I. Corps will continue to assemble under separate instructions. Acknowledge.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General.

From G.H.Q.  
9.30 P.M.

## APPENDIX 19.

II. Corps. Cav. Corps.  
 III. Corps. R.F.C.  
 IV. Corps.  
 O.A. 500. 15th October.

(1) It is the intention of the C.-in-C. to advance eastwards, attack- Map 10. ing the enemy wherever met.

(2) The Cavalry Corps will establish itself on the right bank of the river Lys, between Armentières and Menin and then move in an easterly direction, eventually covering the left flank of the advance. The III. Corps will closely support the movement, its right moving through Sailly on Fleurbaix, the general direction after crossing the Lys being astride that river and downstream.

The II. Corps will push forward drawing towards the III. Corps as opportunity offers. If the II. Corps draws to the N.E. the French will extend their left flank to keep touch.

The IV. Corps, covered by its 3rd Cavalry Division on its left flank, will move between Courtrai [6 miles E.N.E. of Menin] and Roulers, the cavalry being north of Roulers. This corps will not move much in advance of the left of the III. Corps and it will also observe towards the N.E. for the advance of the enemy against the Belgian Army.

(3) Reports to St. Omer.

From C.G.S.  
 1.40 P.M.

A. J. MURRAY, Lt.-Gen.

## APPENDIX 20.

*Secret.*

Copy No. 7.

ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 37<sup>1</sup>

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
 Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field.

General Headquarters,  
 16th October 1914.

1. The Cavalry Corps, II. and III. Corps have to-day been Map 1. successful in driving back the enemy.
2. It is the Commander-in-Chief's intention that the advance of the Army should be continued to-morrow as follows:—
3. The Cavalry Corps will continue to contain the enemy on the right bank of the Lys, thus facilitating the movement of the III. Corps down the right bank of the river.

<sup>1</sup> Operation Order No. 36 was cancelled, and recalled after issue.



The III. Corps will not materially increase the gap now existing between its right and the left of the II. Corps, but it will occupy Armentières and push down stream sufficiently far to cover the reconstruction of the bridges at that place.

II. Corps will act with vigour against the enemy in its front. As soon as the opposition is sufficiently overcome to permit of it, the corps will close to its left and lessen the gap between itself and the III. Corps.

The IV. Corps will continue its present rôle conforming to the movements of the Cavalry Corps and III. Corps.

The 2nd Division of the I. Corps, less units not yet available, will move on Poperinghe at 7 A.M. and will billet in the area Boeschepe [C 8]—Steenvoorde [B 8]—Caestre [B 9].

The 19th Brigade, now in General Reserve, will reach Dickebusch [C 8] during the morning and report its arrival there to G.H.Q.

4. Supply Railheads for 17th October 1914 :—

Cavalry Corps . . . .	Wardrecques [A 9].
II. Corps . . . . .	Pernes [A 11], Camblain [2½ miles E. of Pernes].
III. Corps . . . . .	Thiennes [A 10].
IV. Corps . . . . .	Arneke [A 8].
19th Infantry Brigade } .	
I. Corps } . . . . .	Arques [1¼ miles S.E. of St. Omer].
G.H.Q. } . . . . .	
L. of C. } . . . . .	
R.F.C. } . . . . .	
Ammunition Railhead .	Aire sur la Lys [A 10].

5. Reports to St. Omer.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Issued at 8.30 P.M.

## APPENDIX 21.

*Secret.*

Copy No. 7.

### ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 38

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

General Headquarters,  
17th October 1914.

Map 1. 1. The main force of the enemy's cavalry is reported to have fallen back towards the general line Douai—Lille—Tourcoing.

Lille is reported to be entrenched and strongly held.

The enemy have constructed trenches on the line Radinghem—Perenchies [both in D 10] and along the river Lys between Armenières and Wervicq [E 9]. North of the Lys the enemy holds the line Wervicq—Koelberg [2½ miles N. of Wervicq]—Kezelberg [5 miles N.E. of Wervicq]—Moorslede [E 8]. The hostile columns coming from the direction of Roulers—Thourout—Ostend are in touch with the Allied Forces on the line Dixmude—Nieupoort.

2. The Commander-in-Chief intends to carry out a vigorous attack against the enemy in conjunction with the French forces on the right and left of the British Army. The advance to commence at 6.30 A.M.

3. The II. Corps will attack and capture La Bassée. In this operation it will protect its own left and keep touch with the French cavalry who have been ordered to keep connection with III. Corps and to face and mask Lille. The French Division on the right has been ordered to assist the II. Corps with an infantry brigade and artillery fire.

The III. Corps will move down the Lys on both banks acting with vigour against the enemy wherever met.

The Cavalry Corps will assist III. Corps in this operation.

The IV. Corps will move on Menin [E 8/9] covered on its left by the cavalry division of that corps.

Four French Cavalry divisions have been ordered to move from Ypres on Roulers and will keep touch with the cavalry division of IV. Corps.

The I. Corps will continue detrainment. The portions detrained will remain in present billets.

The 19th Infantry Brigade will remain in billets ready to move at short notice.

4. Supply Railheads for 18th October 1914 :—

Cavalry Corps . . . .	Strazeele [B 9].
I. Corps . . . . .	Ebblinghem [A 9].
II. Corps . . . . .	Béthune.
III. Corps . . . . .	Merville [B 10].
IV. Corps . . . . .	Caestre [B 9].
19th Infantry Brigade } .	
G.H.Q. } . . . . .	Arques [12 miles W. of Hazebrouck].
L. of C. } . . . . .	
R.F.C. } . . . . .	
Ammunition Railhead .	Aire sur la Lys.

5. A report centre will be established at Bailleul from 10 A.M., to which all reports from the front will be sent.

G.H.Q. remains at St. Omer.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Issued at 7.10 P.M.

## APPENDIX 22.

4th and 6th Division ;  
 4th Siege Artillery Battery ;  
 2nd Bridging Train ;  
 5th Divisional Ammunition Park.

G. 229. 17th October.

Map 10. III. Corps Operation Order No. 28. Enemy reported to be holding position from Radinghem to Pérenchies and thence in a north-easterly direction but report received this evening from patrol to effect that it has been through Prêmesques and found Germans retiring seems to indicate that enemy is withdrawing in this neighbourhood. He is also holding right bank of river Lys from Frélinghien to Wervicq. III. Corps has been ordered to move down valley of river Lys attacking enemy vigorously, supported on right by French cavalry and on left by Cavalry Corps. As there is no enemy in front of corps on left bank of river and as right flank of corps would be threatened if it were to try and pass by enemy's position at Pérenchies certain preliminary operations are necessary before orders received can be carried out. First it will be necessary to drive back enemy reported to be between La Vallée and Pérenchies and secondly to gain possession of Frélinghien so as to be in position to pass troops of 4th Division across river at Houplines so that corps may act with its full force in direction chosen for ultimate operation. The following operation will therefore be carried out to-morrow morning commencing at 6.30 A.M. 6th Division to reconnoitre line La Vallée—Pérenchies by pushing forward infantry supported by artillery in sufficient strength to test character of defence. Should enemy be found to be in strength no attack will be delivered until 4th Division is in position to co-operate. Should enemy be weak and give way he should be pushed back at once towards Lomme and contained while the division prepares to advance on Quesnoy. 4th Division will attack Frélinghien from both sides of river and prepare to pass bulk of division over river at Houplines when Frélinghien has been taken. Addressed 4th and 6th Divisions repeated 4th Siege Arty. Btty., 2nd Bridging Train and 5th Divl. Amm. Park.

C. H. HARRINGTON.

Third Corps.  
 11.55 P.M.

## APPENDIX 23.

Copy No. 20.

I. Corps. 19th Infantry Brigade.  
 II. Corps. R.F.C.  
 III. Corps.  
 IV. Corps.

O (a) 561.<sup>1</sup> 18th October 1914.

Map 1. Commander-in-Chief intends to continue attack to-morrow at 6 A.M.

<sup>1</sup> An abbreviated copy, numbered (O (a) 562), was sent to Cavalry Corps.

Cavalry Corps will contain enemy in its front and when opportunity offers cross river Lys and protect left flank of III. Corps keeping touch with IV. Corps.

II. Corps will capture La Bassée [C 11].

III. Corps will continue attack on line on which it was engaged to-day.

IV. Corps will carry out order issued in paras. 2 and 3 of Operation Order No. 38, dated 17th October.

I. Corps and 19th Infantry Brigade will remain in billets until receipt of further orders.

Reports to Bailleul after 10.0 A.M.

Acknowledge.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

8.30 P.M.

## APPENDIX 24.

### OPERATION ORDER No. 2

BY

LT.-GENERAL SIR H. RAWLINSON, BT., C.V.O., C.B.,  
Commanding IV. Corps

IV. Corps Headquarters,  
Le College, Poperinghe,  
18th October 1914.

1. The IV. Corps will advance to-morrow to attack the enemy in Map 1. the neighbourhood of Menin [E 8/9].
2. The 7th Division will arrange to have its artillery in position by 6.30 A.M. and the infantry will then move forward to the attack. The right flank of the 7th Division will be protected by the cavalry of the 2nd Cavalry Division at and about Tenbrielen [D 9] and America [E 8], the left flank being protected at and about St. Pieter [E 8] by the 3rd Cavalry Division.
3. The 3rd Cavalry Division will move forward to the line of the Roulers—Menin road at 6.30 A.M. and will push forward strong reconnaissances to Ledeghem, Winkel St. Eloi [both E 8] and Isegheem [F 7/8]. They will occupy Roulers and maintain touch with the 5th French Cavalry at Hooglede [E 7].
4. A battery of horse artillery will be sent to-night by G.O.C. 7th Division to report to the G.O.C. 3rd Cavalry Division at Zonnebeke [D 8]. This battery will remain with 3rd Cavalry Division until further orders.
5. Two armoured trains will proceed to the neighbourhood of Houthem and will from there bring fire to bear on the German batteries which are reported to be in position on the south side of



river Lys at La Basse Ville and La Blandrisse [respectively 2 and 3 miles E. of Comines].

6. Rendezvous for supplies to-morrow the road junction  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile S.W. of Ypres on the Ypres—Bailleul road.

Time for 3rd Cavalry Division . . . 1 P.M.

Time for 7th Infantry Division . . . 5.30 P.M.

7. Corps headquarters will be established at the Hotel de Ville, Ypres, from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. to-morrow.

R. A. K. MONTGOMERY,  
Br.-Gen. G.S. IV. Corps.

Issued at 11 P.M. by motor cyclists.

## APPENDIX 25.

### 7TH DIVISION OPERATION ORDER No. 19

5th Kil. on Ypres—Menin Road,  
18th October 1914.

Map 2. 1. The enemy occupies entrenched positions at Menin and Wervicq. He has a post with artillery at Gheluwe; aeroplanes located his battery at the 0 of 20 [ $\frac{1}{2}$  mile] S. of Gheluwe with wagons 400 yards to the S.E. He has a second entrenched post at Kleythoek<sup>1</sup> (3 miles N. of Menin).

Our 2nd Cavalry Division has a detachment at Houthem. One brigade will protect our right flank to-morrow by engaging Wervicq. Our 3rd Cavalry Division is at Moorslede. One brigade will be at St. Pieter at 7 A.M. to-morrow to protect our left flank. Our III. Army Corps is moving East and was about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of the river Deule (N.W. of Lille) this evening.

2. The present intention is to carry out an attack on Menin in three distinct phases as follows:—

1st phase an attack by the 22nd Infantry Brigade on the trenches at Kleythoek from the north.

2nd phase a combined attack by the 20th and 21st Infantry Brigades against Gheluwe.

3rd phase a combined attack by the division from Gheluwe and Kleythoek on Menin.

Orders for the 2nd and 3rd phases will be issued later.

3. 22nd Infantry Brigade and 54th Field Company R.E. will rendezvous at Strooiboornhoek clearing Beelaere by 6 A.M. The attack on Kleythoek will be supported by the divisional artillery as follows:—

(a) XIV. Heavy Artillery Brigade (less 1 battery) and 1 Heavy Battery (111th) from Kruseecke to keep down artillery fire from Wervicq.

(b) XXXV. Field Artillery Brigade and 1 Heavy Battery (112th)

<sup>1</sup> "Klythoek" on Map 2.

in position near Terhand but S.W. of Beelaere—Terhand—Gheluwe road to support the attack of the 22nd Infantry Brigade.

(c) XXII. Field Artillery Brigade in position near Terhand but N.E. of the same road to keep down artillery fire from Gheluwe. The order for the advance of the 22nd Infantry Brigade will be issued by divisional headquarters.

When the trenches at Kleythoek have been captured the 22nd Infantry Brigade will re-form and reconnoitre for the attack on Menin.

55th Field Company R.E. will be attached to the 20th Infantry Brigade. The Northumberland Hussars will protect the left flank of the 22nd Infantry Brigade and connect with the 3rd Cavalry Division. The Cyclist Company will be in divisional reserve at Poezelhoek.

4. The 20th and 21st Infantry Brigades will remain in concealment ready to advance near Kruseecke and Terhand respectively.

5. Orders to the Field Ambulances will be issued by the A.D.M.S.

6. Refilling point for supplies will be at the Railway Station at Ypres. Supply Sections must be clear of their Brigade Areas by daylight. Baggage Sections will accompany Supply Sections as far as Hooze where they will park clear of the road.

7. Divisional headquarters will be at the H [ $\frac{3}{4}$  mile S.W. of Beelaere] of Poezelhoek after 7 A.M.

H. MONTGOMERY, Colonel,  
General Staff.

Issued at 8.30 P.M.

## APPENDIX 26.

O (a) 585. 19th October 1914.

I. Corps will move with its right on Ypres—Passchendaele using Map 1. roads north of Ypres—Zonnebeke—Moorslede road which is allotted to IV. Corps.

II. and III. Corps will continue operations against enemy in their front.

Cavalry Corps will maintain present position and hold enemy to the river line.

IV. Corps will act in accordance with separate instructions.

19th Infantry Brigade will remain under G.H.Q. and entrench a position between Fauquissart<sup>1</sup> and Fleurbaix [both C 10].

Reports to Baillcul after 10 A.M.

Acknowledge.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

G.H.Q.  
9.0 P.M.

<sup>1</sup> "Fauquissart" on Map 1.

## APPENDIX 27.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO IV. CORPS

O.A. 587. 19th October 1914.

Map 12. Reference O.A. 585 you will maintain and entrench position now held by 7th Division. Your cavalry division should keep touch with French Cavalry on its left and cover move of I. Corps. Reconnoitre towards Menin and capture it if you can do so without uncovering move of I. Corps. Acknowledge.

G.H.Q.

9.5 P.M.

## APPENDIX 28.

*Secret.*

Copy No. 6.

## ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 39

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

General Headquarters,  
20th October 1914.

- Map 1. 1. The enemy to-day has made determined attacks on the II., III. and IV. Corps which have been successfully repulsed.
2. The Commander-in-Chief intends to contain the enemy with the II., III. and Cavalry Corps, and the 7th Division of IV. Corps and to attack vigorously with the I. Corps.
3. The I. Corps will march in the direction of Thourout [E 6] using the road Ypres—Passchendaele [D 8]—Roulers and roads to the north. This corps will attack the enemy wherever met.
- The cavalry division of the IV. Corps will protect the right of the I. Corps and keep connection with the 7th Division.
- The II., III. and Cavalry Corps and 7th Division will strongly entrench and maintain themselves on the line indicated below.
- These corps will hold the enemy opposed to them to its ground and at the same time will take every opportunity of seizing tactical advantages that may present themselves.
- II. Corps—Canal Bridge north of H in Cuinchy [C 11]—Le Riez [3½ miles S.W. of Radinghem, D 10].
- III. Corps—Radinghem (inclusive)—Point 29—Chateau d'Hancardry—R of Porte Egal Fm. [respectively 1 mile N.E., 2½ miles N.N.E. and 3¾ miles N. of Radinghem]—South of Frelinghien—Le Gheer [both D 9].

Connection is maintained between the II. and III. Corps by French cavalry.

The 19th Infantry Brigade, acting under orders of III. Corps, will entrench a position in rear of the French line covering Fromelles [C 10].

Cavalry Corps—North of G in Le Gheer—Kortewilde [D 9].

7th Division—Zandvoorde—Kruiseecke [both D 8]—Poezelhoek [1 mile N.E. of Gheluvelt]—Zonnebeke [D 8].

4. Railheads for 21st October 1914 :—

I. Corps . . . . .	Caestre [B 9]
II. Corps . . . . .	Béthune [B 11]
III. Corps . . . . .	Merville [B 10]
19th Infantry Brigade . . . . .	
IV. Corps . . . . .	} Bailleul [C 9]
3rd Cavalry Division . . . . .	
Cavalry Corps . . . . .	Strazeele [B 9]
Lahore Division . . . . .	} Wardrecques [A 9]
G.H.Q. . . . .	
R.F.C. . . . .	
L. of C. . . . .	

*Ammunition Railheads :—*

II. Corps . . . . .	Aire [A 10]
Cavalry Corps . . . . .	} Hazebrouck [B 9]
I., III. and IV. Corps . . . . .	
3rd Cavalry Division . . . . .	
Lahore Division . . . . .	

5. Reports to St. Omer.

Issued at 9.30 P.M.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

APPENDIX 29.

I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 19

20th October 1914.

- (a) Enemy made a general attack along the whole line of the British front to-day, but all ground was successfully held against him. Map 2.
- (b) The French Cavalry on our left was strongly engaged during the day and at dusk was reported to be holding the line Clercken [5 miles N. of Langemarck] through Forêt d'Ilouthulst to vicinity of Poelappelle and connects with the left of our 3rd Cavalry Division.  
3rd Cavalry Division is near Langemarck and at St. Julien. Our 7th Division is on the line Zonnebeke—Kruiseecke.
- G.O.C. I. Corps intends to continue his advance in the direction of Thourout [8 miles N. of Roulers] driving back the enemy wherever found.
- The 1st Division will advance so as to reach Langemarck at 7 A.M. and will attack thence in the direction of Poelappelle.



One infantry brigade, one brigade R.F.A., and troop of divisional cavalry will be placed in Corps Reserve at cross roads 1 mile south of Pilckem.

Particular attention will be paid to the protection of the left flank from the direction of Forêt d'Houthulst.

The 2nd Division will cross the Zonnebeke—Langemark road at 7 A.M. and attack in the general direction of Passchendaele, keeping touch with the 1st Division on the left.

4. So far as possible, the advance of the I. Corps will be conducted in the following stages :—
  - (a) Poelcappelle—Passchendaele.
  - (b) Schaep Balie<sup>1</sup>—Westroosebeke.
 As ground is gained it must be entrenched.
5. The right flank of the I. Corps will be protected by the IV. Corps; the left flank will be protected by the French Army under the command of General Bidon.
6. Reports to Hotel de la Chatelaine, Ypres after 7 A.M. to-morrow.
7. Trains will be kept west of the Ypres—Boesinghe canal.

J. E. GOUGH, Br.-General,  
S.G.S.O., I. Army Corps.

Issued at 10 P.M.

*Note.*—Owing to the enclosed nature of the country it is important that guns should be pushed close up behind the firing line by batteries and sections at every opportunity.

## APPENDIX 30.

### 1ST DIVISION OPERATION ORDER No. 31

21st October 1914.

- Map 2. 1 (a) The enemy made a general attack along the whole line of the British front to-day, but all ground was successfully held against him.
- (b) The French Cavalry on our left was strongly engaged during the day, and at dusk was holding a line about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile west of the Forêt d'Houthulst and thence between Langemark and Poelcappelle.
- Our 3rd Cavalry Division is near Langemark and St. Julien. Our 7th Division is on the line Zonnebeke—Krui-seeke.
2. The I. Corps will continue its advance in the direction of Thourout, driving back the enemy wherever met.
  3. The 1st Division will advance so as to reach Langemark at 7 A.M. and will attack thence in the direction of Poelcappelle.

<sup>1</sup> "Schaap Baillie" on Map 2.

The left of the 2nd Division at 7 A.M. will be at cross roads  $\frac{1}{2}$  m. South of Langemarek and the general direction of its attack will be Passchendaele keeping touch with the 1st Division on its left. Particular attention will be paid to the protection of the left flank from the direction of Foret d'Houthulst.

As far as possible the advance of the I. Corps will be conducted in the following stages :—

(a) Poelcappelle—Passchendaele.

(b) Schaep Balie—Westroosebeke.

As ground is gained it must be entrenched.

4. The 2nd Infantry Brigade, XXV. Brigade R.F.A., and 1 troop Divisional Cavalry, under Br.-General Bulfin, will be in Corps reserve at cross roads one mile south of Pilekem. A staff officer from this reserve will report its arrival to I. Corps Headquarters at Hotel de la Chatelaine, Ypres, and remain there for orders.
5. The Division will march as follows :—
 

*Advanced Guard.* Commander Br.-General Landon (to be clear of the Inn at 5 km. stone on Elverdinghe road by 5.5 A.M.).

3rd Infantry Brigade (less 1 Battalion, 1 troop and 1 platoon).  
 XXXIX. Brigade R.F.A. (less 2 Batteries).  
 1 Battery XLIII. Brigade R.F.A.  
 1 Section 26th Field Company R.E.  
 Bearer Division 3rd Field Ambulance.

*Main body in order of march.* Starting point 1st km. stone on Elverdinghe road.

1st Echelon Divisional Headquarters . . . . .	4.55 A.M.
Divisional Mounted troops (less 1 troop and 1 platoon) . . . . .	4.55 A.M.
1 Battalion, 3rd Infantry Brigade . . . . .	5.0 A.M.
2 Batteries, XXXIX. Brigade R.F.A. . . . .	5.10 A.M.
XLIII. Brigade R.F.A. (less 1 Battery) . . . . .	5.20 A.M.
XXXIX. Brigade Ammunition Column . . . . .	5.25 A.M.
26th Field Company R.E. (less 1 Sec.) to join at Elverdinghe.	
1st Infantry Brigade . . . . .	5.25 A.M.
2nd Echelon Divisional Headquarters . . . . .	6.20 A.M.
XXVI. Brigade R.F.A. . . . .	6.25 A.M.
XLIII. Brigade Ammunition Column . . . . .	6.45 A.M.
26th Heavy Battery and Ammunition Column . . . . .	7.0 A.M.
23rd Field Company R.E. . . . .	7.5 A.M.

Pontoons of both Field Companies march in rear of Heavy Battery.
6. The Corps Reserve will march from Elverdinghe in rear of 23rd Field Company at 8.5 A.M.
7. The Divisional Mounted Troops and Battery XLIII. Brigade R.F.A. allotted to the Advance Guard will move on to the Elverdinghe road and halt just clear of Poperinghe at 2.45 A.M. where they will receive orders from General Landon. The Section 26th Field Company will join the Advance Guard at Elverdinghe.

8. Divisional Ammunition Column will march at 6 A.M. to Elverdinghe.
9. *Field Ambulances.* Nos. 1 and 3 Field Ambulances (less Bearer Divisions) will assemble and park at 11.30 A.M. east of Elverdinghe road about 2 kilometres from Poperinghe. No. 2 Field Ambulance (less Bearer Division) will remain in present billets.  
Bearer Divisions will march in rear of their respective Brigades.
10. *Train.* (i) Supply Sections will concentrate at Inn 2 kilometres S.W. of Elverdinghe and refill at 11 A.M.  
(ii) Baggage and Blanket Sections will assemble in Brigade areas after troops have marched off. They will join Supply Sections and park at Inn under orders of O.C. Train by 12 noon.
11. Reports to the head of the Main Body after 5 A.M.

F. W. KERR, Colonel,  
General Staff, 1st Division.

Issued at 12.50 A.M.

*Note.*—Owing to the enclosed nature of the country it is important that guns should be pushed close up behind the firing line by batteries or sections at every opportunity.

## APPENDIX 31.

### 2ND DIVISION OPERATION ORDER No. 26

Ypres,  
21st October 1914.

- Map 2.
1. Enemy attacked along the whole British front yesterday but the ground was successfully held against him.
  2. Our 3rd Cavalry Division is about Langemarek and St. Julien. Our 7th Division on line Zonnebeke—Kruiseecke. French Cavalry on our left at dusk was reported to be holding the line Clercken [5 miles N. of Langemarek]—Langemarek, on west edge of Foret d'Houthulst.
  3. The I. Corps will continue its advance to-day towards Thourout [8 miles N. of Roulers] driving back the enemy wherever met.  
1st Division is to reach Langemarek at 7 A.M. and attack thence in the direction of Poelcappelle.  
2nd Division is to cross the Zonnebeke—Langemarek road, when 1st Division leaves Langemarek, and attack in direction of Passchendaele, keeping touch with 1st Division.  
The right flank of I. Corps will be protected by the IV. Corps, and the left flank by the French troops of General Bidon.
  4. Following moves will be carried out by 6.30 A.M., under

arrangements to be made by G.O's.C. 4th, 5th and 6th Infantry Brigades respectively :—

- (a) 4th Guards Brigade, XLI. Brigade R.F.A., 11th Field Company R.E., B Squadron 15th Hussars, 1 Platoon Cyclists, Bearer sub-division, 4th Field Ambulance, will assemble on W. side of ridge N.W. of Zonnebeke (height 37).
- (b) 5th Infantry Brigade, XXXVI. Brigade R.F.A., 5th Field Company R.E., 2 Platoons Cyclists, Bearer sub-division, No. 5 Field Ambulance, will assemble just W. of cross roads  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile N. of St. Julien, so as to be concealed from the eastward.
- (c) 6th Infantry Brigade, XXXIV. and XLIV. Brigades R.F.A. and Heavy Battery will assemble on each side of the road at Wieltje, the artillery placed close to the road in readiness to move forward.
5. C.R.A. will arrange for artillery reconnaissances as soon as there is light enough.
  6. B Squadron 15th Hussars will maintain touch with IV. Corps and be prepared to cover right flank of Division.
  7. 4th Guards Brigade will arrange for reconnaissance of the Stroombeek and ground between it and the Hannebeek.
  8. Brigade Ammunition Columns will remain at Vlamertinghe—Divisional Ammunition Column at Reninghelst.
  9. Remainder of Bearer divisions of 4th and 5th Field Ambulances will move to Wieltje by 8 A.M. The tent division of 4th and 5th Field Ambulances and whole of 6th Field Ambulance will remain at Vlamertinghe.
  10. Train will be parked W. of Ypres, clear of roads.
  11. Reporting centre will be established at St. Julien at 6 A.M. Infantry Brigadiers, C.R.A., C.R.E. and A.D.M.S. will meet G.O.C. there at that hour.

R. WHIGHAM, Colonel,  
General Staff, 2nd Division.

Issued at 1.30 A.M.

## APPENDIX 32.

### TELEGRAM FROM FIELD-MARSHAL SIR J. FRENCH TO EARL KITCHENER

(No. F. 415)

22nd October 1914, 12.12 P.M.

There was more or less heavy fighting yesterday all along my front **Map 1.** from Langemark, which is north of Ypres, through Zonnebeke [D 8], Houthem, Ploegsteert, Frélinghien [all D 9], Pérenchies, Radinghem [both D 10] and La Bassée [C 11]. The left of the 4th Division assisted by de Lisle's cavalry captured Le Gheer [D 9] and 200 prisoners. Here and there we were slightly driven back, but our successes predominated, and everywhere the enemy suffered severe losses. The Belgians are continuing to hold their ground



splendidly ; on the canal north of Ypres, in addition to the 42nd Regular Division already there, the French IX. Corps is moving up to support them. General Joffre and General Foch are both up in the Belgian theatre of war, and are intent on driving the Germans east. In my opinion the enemy are vigorously playing their last card, and I am confident that they will fail.

## APPENDIX 33.

*Secret.*

Copy No. 7.

### ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 40

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH, G.C.B., ETC.,  
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces in the Field

General Headquarters,  
24th October 1914.

Map 1. 1. In the attack by the I. Corps yesterday near Langemark [D 7] over 600 prisoners belonging to the XXIII. and XXVI. Reserve Corps were captured and the enemy left 1,500 dead on the ground. The IV. Corps has been heavily engaged to-day about Becelaere [D 8] and successfully maintained its position. On the remainder of the front the situation is unchanged.

The IX. French Corps has concentrated N. of Ypres and is attacking in the direction of Roulers in co-operation with our I. Corps.

2. The Commander-in-Chief intends to advance to-morrow with the I., IV. and Cavalry Corps and to contain the enemy with the II. and III. Corps.

I. Corps will advance eastward with its right north of Ypres—Menin road (exclusive) and with its left on the Zonnebeke [D 8]—Moorslede [E 8] roads (inclusive), and keep touch with the French right.

IV. Corps (less 3rd Cavalry Division) will conform to the movements of the I. Corps but not in advance of it and move with its left on Ypres—Menin road (inclusive) on the general line Gheluwe [E 8]—Wervicq [E 9] (inclusive).

Cavalry Corps, 3rd Cavalry Division and 7th Indian Brigade under the command of Cavalry Corps will keep touch with the right of IV. Corps and advance on the line Le Touquet [D 9] (exclusive)—Wervicq (exclusive).

III. and II. Corps (with Lahore Division less 7th Indian Brigade) will maintain and strengthen their present positions.

3. *Railheads.*—

II. Corps . . . . .	Pernes [A 11], Camblain [2½ miles E. of Pernes]
Lahore Division . . . . .	Lillers [A 10/11]

III. Corps	.	.	} St. Venant [B 10]
19th Infantry Brigade	.	.	
Cavalry Corps	.	.	} Ebblinghem [A 9]
IV. Corps, I. Corps and 3rd	.	.	
Cavalry Division	.	.	} Caestre [B 9]
G.H.Q.	.	.	
R.F.C.	.	.	} St. Omer.
L. of C.	.	.	

## 4. Reports to St. Omer.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Issued at 10 P.M.

## APPENDIX 34.

O (a) 758. 25th.

Attack of I. Corps progressing favourably. Capture of two guns Map 20. and many prisoners reported. Action by all corps will continue to-morrow in accordance with Operation Order No. 40 of 24th October. Acknowledge.

G.H.Q.  
7.45 P.M.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

## APPENDIX 35.

Copy No. 6.

I. Corps, IV. Corps,  
II. Corps, Cavalry Corps,  
III. Corps, R.F.C.

O (a) 794. 26th October 1914.

I. Corps and IV. Corps less 3rd Cavalry Division will attack Map 21. vigorously to-morrow in conjunction with the French on left of I. Corps.

Cavalry Corps with 3rd Cavalry Division by offensive action commencing from the left and centre will do all that is possible to assist the right flank of the 7th Division.

II. and III. Corps will maintain and further strengthen their present positions, seizing every opportunity for a vigorous local offensive.

Acknowledge.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

From G.H.Q.  
6.15 P.M.

## APPENDIX 36.

O (a) 817. 27th October.

**Map 22.** Operations will be continued to-morrow. During the temporary absence of General Rawlinson, IV. Corps less 3rd Cavalry Division is placed under I. Corps. 3rd Cavalry Division remains under Cavalry Corps.  
Acknowledge.

G.H.Q.  
6.30 P.M.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

## APPENDIX 37.

Copy No. 6.

O (a) 837. 28th October 1914.

**Map 23.** A strong hostile attack made last night on 2nd Division was beaten off with considerable loss. This morning the 6th Division successfully counter-attacked the enemy, who had captured a trench, driving him out with a loss of over 200 killed. Operations will continue to-morrow in accordance with previous orders. Acknowledge.

G.H.Q.  
8.15 P.M.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

## APPENDIX 38.

Copy No. 5.

O (a) 870. 29th October 1914.

**Map 1.** The enemy in great strength attacked the I. Corps and 7th Division to-day and after gaining some ground were successfully counter-attacked and driven back to the line of the cross roads S.E. of Gheluvelt [D 8]—Poazelhoek [1 mile N.E. of Gheluvelt]. A heavy attack this morning against the 5th Division was repulsed with great loss to the enemy. An attack on the 4th Division late in the evening was also repulsed.

The French on our left have made progress and captured Bix-schoote [D 7].

Operations will continue to-morrow in accordance with previous orders. Acknowledge.

G.H.Q.  
9.50 P.M.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

## APPENDIX 39.

## I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 28

1st Division  
 2nd Division  
 7th Division  
 Major-General Bulfin  
 Cavalry Corps  
 2nd Cavalry Division  
 Br.-General Lord Cavan  
 G.A. 112. 30th October.

Major-General Bulfin will assume command of the Northampton Map 1. and Sussex and of the three battalions under Lord Cavan's command. Lord Cavan will remain and act as a brigadier. Three French battalions are moving to Zillebeke [D 8] this evening and will co-operate in the advance to-morrow morning. A strong force of the enemy has been advancing from Comines [D 9] to-day and by dusk had reached approximately the line Inn<sup>1</sup> just [ $\frac{1}{4}$  mile] north of second D in Zandvoorde [D 8] to the north of Hollebeke Chateau to Hollēbeke village [D 8]. This hostile force will be attacked to-morrow morning by the troops under General Bulfin and by the three French infantry battalions and the 2nd and 3rd British Cavalry Divisions. The cavalry will advance on the left side of the canal. The French battalions will advance with their right on the canal on a front about 1,400 yards. Major-General Bulfin will advance on the left of the French keeping a strong reserve in his own hands. This advance will start at 6.30 A.M. from the line held by our troops and will be covered by our heavy artillery and the armoured train. Brigadier-General Jackson will arrange for close support by the 7th Division Field Artillery. Reports to White House near Halte<sup>1</sup> [ $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles E. of Ypres] from 5.30 A.M.

Major-General Bulfin will take general direction of the French troops.

J. E. GOUGH, Br.-General,  
 Senior G.S.O., 1st Army Corps.

7.5 P.M.

## APPENDIX 40.

*Secret.*

INSTRUCTIONS TO I. CORPS AND  
 CAVALRY CORPS

O (a) 932. 31st October 1914.

I. Corps and Cavalry Corps will maintain and strongly entrench Map 2. the line now held.

<sup>1</sup> Written with reference to map Belgium, 1/100,000.



On the left of the I. Corps the IX. French Corps is to attack in the direction of Becelaere and eastwards.

On the right of the I. Corps six French battalions and eight batteries under General d'Urbal are to attack from the line Wytschaete—St. Eloi in the direction of Hollebeke.

It is most important that the five French battalions holding the line of the canal north of Hollebeke and now under the orders of I. Corps should be launched to the attack at the same time as the attack from the line Wytschaete—St. Eloi.

The necessary arrangements for this will be carried out by G.O.C. I. Corps who may, in the circumstances, consider it advisable to place the battalions under the orders of General d'Urbal.

The French attack is to be supported from the direction of Kemmel by four battalions of Chasseurs and other formations arriving during the morning.

Cavalry Corps will be prepared to allow the French attack to pass through the line held by the corps and both I. Corps and Cavalry Corps will do all that is possible to support the French attack and seize every opportunity of assuming the offensive.

G.H.Q.  
9 P.M.

A. J. MURRAY,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

## APPENDIX 41.

### I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 29

2nd Division	3rd Cavalry Division
1st Division	Major-General Bulfin
7th Division	4th Brigade

G. 583. 31st October.

Map 2. Troops will hold their positions. The 1st Division connecting with the cavalry and the cavalry with the 7th Division and the 7th Division with General Bulfin who connects with the French troops. If it can be done without leaving a gap the Cavalry will pull out into corps reserve either to-night or first thing to-morrow morning and will concentrate south of Hooze Chateau where they were ordered this morning. The IX. French Corps will take the offensive to-morrow on our left. The British Cavalry Corps reinforced by a French infantry division will also take the offensive from the direction of St. Eloi with its left directed on Hollebeke and then on Zandvoorde. The I. Corps will be prepared to join in this general offensive movement. Reports to White House<sup>1</sup> near crossing.

7 P.M.

J. E. GOUGH, Br.-General,  
Senior G.S.O., 1st Army Corps.

<sup>1</sup> "White Chateau" on Map 2.

## SUPPLEMENTARY ORDER

1st Division	General Bulfin
2nd Division	Lord Cavan
7th Division	3rd Cavalry Division

G. 585. 31st October.

(1) The French are attacking to-morrow morning at 6.30 A.M. Map 2. from St. Eloi in the direction of Houthem in co-operation with our Cavalry Corps.

(2) As the attack goes forward General Moussy will co-operate. General Bulfin will then move forward in co-operation with General Moussy. 7th Division will move forward with General Bulfin's left.

(3) Another attack will be made by the French from our left flank directed on Molenhoek and Becelaere starting at 6.30 A.M. 2nd Division will attack on Reutel and Noordeindhoek<sup>1</sup> under direction of General Monro in co-operation with the French.

(4) The French troops will assemble west of Zonnebeke at 5 A.M. and will pass through our lines about 6.30 A.M.

Reports to White House<sup>2</sup> near level crossing.

11.15 P.M.

## APPENDIX 42.

## I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 31

To 1st, 2nd and 7th Divisions. 8.30 P.M. 2nd Nov. 1914.

We have maintained our line against very severe attacks through- Map 2. out the whole day. On our right the French after a series of attacks and counter-attacks made some progress and report having taken over 100 prisoners. On our left the IX. French Corps has maintained its line. Our III. Corps was also attacked unsuccessfully by the enemy. General Foch, commanding the French armies in Belgium, is satisfied with the general situation. The line will be maintained to-morrow at all costs. Every effort will be made to organize local reserves which will be employed for immediate counter-attack in the event of the enemy penetrating our line. The cavalry division will be in corps reserve and will be at the road junction one mile south of Hooge by 5.45 A.M. as to-day. The London Scottish will be in corps reserve near Ypres on the Menin Road arriving about noon. A French battalion will probably arrive in the morning and will also go into corps reserve near Hooge. Arrangements will be made to pull out one or two battalions of the 2nd Division which will also go into corps reserve near Hooge. Further orders will be issued when the French plan of operations for to-morrow has been decided.

J. CHARTERIS, Capt. for  
S.G.S.O.

<sup>1</sup> "Noordemdhoek" on Map 2. This place is spelt "Noord Westhoek" on map Belgium, 1/100,000.

<sup>2</sup> "White Chateau" on Map 2.

## APPENDIX 43.

O (a) 64. 3rd November 1914.

Map 2.

The attack by the French on Wytsehaete—Houthem arranged for this afternoon was delayed by congestion on the roads. It will take place to-morrow morning. The rôle of all troops is as already directed,<sup>1</sup> General Morland supporting the Cavalry Corps with two battalions.

G.H.Q.  
11.45 P.M.

P. DE B. RADCLIFFE,  
Major,  
General Staff.

## APPENDIX 44.

O (a) 86. 4th November 1914.

Map 2.

The rôle of all corps is as for to-day. Conneau's Cavalry is to attack Messines. The Cavalry Corps with two battalions of 5th Division under arrangements to be made by Cavalry Corps will take part in this attack. Artillery of 5th and 4th Divisions will co-operate.

G.H.Q.  
11.50 P.M.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

## APPENDIX 45.

O (a) 114. 5th November 1914.

The orders for to-day hold good for to-morrow's operations.

G.H.Q.  
11.35 P.M.

G. M. HARPER,  
Colonel,  
General Staff.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 40.

## GENERAL INDEX

- Africa, East, German, 20; South, Union of, 21; South West, German, 21
- Albert, H.M., King of the Belgians, 38, 43, 47, 51, 65, 300
- Alderson, Maj.-Gen. E. A. H., Canadian Expeditionary Force, 9
- Allenby, Maj.-Gen. E. H. H., 67; appointed to command Cav. Corps, 68; 100, 132, 143, 144, 151, 152, 210, 231, 232, 250, 274, 275, 280, 288, 295, 296, 297, 307, 308, 325, 353, 354, 374, 382, 414, 422, 476, 500
- Ammunition, gun, reserve, British, 13, 16 (*f.n.*), 25 (Note); reserve, French, 11, 13 (*f.n.*); shortage of, 203, 210, 231, 266, 341, 343, 354, 360, 379, 383, 406, 446
- Anderson, Lieut.-Gen. C. A., 482
- Anderson, Lieut. F., 438
- Anderson, Col. W. H., 480
- Anley, Br.-Gen. F. G., 105, 143, 150
- Antwerp, fortifications, 32 (*f.n.*); Germans engaged in siege, 33; German plan, 33, 34; preparations for evacuation, 35; Germans break through outer forts, 37; withdrawal to the Nethe, 38; despatch of British assistance to, 39; Churchill's offer to assume command of British, 46; Rawlinson appointed, 46; decision to occupy inner forts, 47; Germans close in, 50; situation on evening of 7th Oct., 52; decision to evacuate, 52; bombardment of inner forts, 55; situation reported to Kitchener, 57; Belgian Court of Enquiry, 57 (*f.n.*); evacuation begun, 57; casualties of R.N.D. at, 62 (*f.n.*); German theory as to abandonment of the forts, 64 (*f.n.*); composition of force for relief of, 408
- Armentières, occupation of, 106, 113; battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*); battle of, 149, 225; limits of battle, 231 (*f.n.*); end of battle, 231
- Armstrong, Whitworth & Co., 14 (*f.n.*)
- Artillery, observation at La Bassée, 79; method of employing, 13th Oct., 82; British supports French attacks, 90; French placed under 5th (British) Div., 91; barrage, 91 (*f.n.*); heavy guns with B.E.F., 164 (*f.n.*); employment of at Langemark, 164; heavy, British, 164 (*f.n.*); employment at La Bassée, method of, 206; German at Ypres, 259; British at Ypres, 259; German misuse of, at Gheluvelt, 285 (*f.n.*); first use of H.E. shell, 340; British, at Battles of Ypres, 463
- Askwith, Lieut.-Col. H. F., 485
- Asquith, Rt. Hon. H. H., 46
- Aston, Br.-Gen. Sir G. G., 20 (*f.n.*), 28, 29, 30, 498
- Australia, offer of contingent, 5, 9; despatch of Imperial Force, 10; sends expedition to German New Guinea, 24
- Baddeley, Col. C. E., 484
- Bailleul occupied, 98
- Baird Smith, Lieut.-Col. A. G., 319
- Balloon observation, 34 (*f.n.*), 303 (*f.n.*)
- Bannatyne, Lieut.-Col. W. S., 200
- Barker, Captain R. V., 334
- Barrage, 91 (and *f.n.*)
- Barrow, Gen. Sir E. G., 20 (*f.n.*)
- Barrow, Br.-Gen. G. de S., 476
- Barry, Lieut.-Col. S. L., 349
- Barwell, Major E. E., 305



- ing of change to Havre and Rouen, 257; re-opening of northern ports as, 260
- Battenberg, Admiral Prince Louis of, 40
- Battenberg, Lieut. Prince Maurice of, 254
- Battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*)
- B.C.D. Line, 457
- B.E.F., rise in strength of, 8 (*f.n.*); 46; situation of on evening of 7th Oct., 52; rôle of, in Race to the Sea, 69; situation on evening of 11th Oct., 71; co-operation with French, 90, 92 (Note II.); situation night 14th/15th Oct., 100; situation midnight 15th/16th Oct., 102; general advance eastwards, 103; situation night 16th/17th Oct., 106; situation night 17th/18th Oct., 109; situation night 18th/19th Oct., 119; losses between 9th and 18th Oct., 121; situation night 20th/21st October, 148; situation night 21st/22nd Oct., 166; placed on defensive, 21st Oct., 172; situation on 22nd Oct., 182; general situation night 23rd/24th Oct., 190; forces opposing 23rd October, 191 (*f.n.*); situation night 24th/25th Oct., 202; line completed from Givenchy to Ypres, 207; superiority of training, 220; situation on morning of 25th Oct., 234; thanked by Government 25th Oct., 242; situation night 26th/27th Oct., 251; situation night 28th/29th Oct., 257; railway routes used by, 260; railheads, 260; situation night 29th/30th October, 275; distribution on morning 30th Oct., 282; situation at nightfall 30th Oct., 296; distribution at nightfall 30th Oct., 298; condition of, 299; co-operation with French, 299; first use of observation balloons, 303 (*f.n.*); numerical inferiority 31st Oct., 343; situation night 31st Oct./1st Nov., 345; situation on evening 1st Nov., 359; situation on evening 2nd Nov., 372; first consignment rifle grenades, 381; distribution on night 5th/6th Nov., 388; odds against on 6th Nov., 390; orders for 6th Nov., 393; operations on 8th November, 406; situation night 10th/11th November, 415; general situation night 11th/12th Nov., 446; German account of British troops, 456; Prince of Wales joins, 16th Nov., 458 (*f.n.*); reorganization of line, 458; disposition on 22nd Nov., 460; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466; reinforcements between 15th Aug. and 10th Nov., 467 (*f.n.*); Order of Battle, 473
- Belgian Army, risk of being cut off in Antwerp, 30; preparations to evacuate Antwerp, 35; withdrawal to the Nethe, 38; retirement from the Nethe, 42; H.Q. leave Antwerp, 51; situation on evening of 11th Oct., 72; situation night 14th/15th Oct., 100; situation night 15th/16th October, 103; situation night 17th/18th Oct., 109; Battle of the Yser, 117; situation night 18th/19th Oct., 120; condition of, 127; attacked 19th Oct., 133; situation on 20th/21st Oct., 148; situation night 21st/22nd Oct., 166; 167; situation on 22nd Oct., 182; general situation night 23rd/24th Oct., 190; forces opposing 23rd Oct., 191 (*f.n.*); situation night 24th/25th October, 202; coastal force on 24th Oct., 203; situation on morning of 25th Oct., 234; casualties between 15th and 25th Oct., 241; situation night 26th/27th Oct., 251; inundations begun, 257; situation night 28th/29th Oct., 258; distribution on morning 30th Oct., 282; loss of Dixmude, 10th Nov., 411; situation night 10th/11th Nov., 415; 11th Nov., 445
- Belgium, Prime Minister, 36; Supreme Council of National Defence, 38, 39, 47; Council of Ministers, 38; removal of Government to Ostend, 39
- Bernard, Gen., 345; failure of attack on 1st Nov., 359; 366
- Beseler, Gen. v., 28 (*f.n.*); in command at Antwerp, 32 (*f.n.*); orders bombardment of Antwerp, 51; 55, 62, 63, 103; orders retirement, 300; goes to Russia, 450 (*f.n.*)
- Beves, Col. P. S., 22
- Beyers, Gen., 22

- Bidon, Gen., 103, 110, 120, 146  
 Bingham, Br.-Gen. Hon. C. E., 308, 351, 477  
 Blewitt, Lieut. R., 331  
 Bols, Lieut.-Col. L. J., 81  
 Bonar Law, Rt. Hon. A., 11 (*f.n.*)  
 Bonnery, Comdt., 408  
 Botha, Gen. Louis, 21, 22  
 Bottomley, Major H. R., 285 (*f.n.*)  
 Bouchez, Gen., 344, 352, 410  
 Bowes, Br.-Gen. W. H., 208 (*f.n.*), 209  
 Brick-stacks, The, 85  
 Bridges, Maj.-Gen. W. T., 10  
 Briggs, Br.-Gen. C. J., 304, 306, 476  
 British Army, expansion of, 1; strength in Aug. 1914, 2; number of recruits in Sept. 1914 and Sept. 1915, 4  
 Brodie, Lieut. W. L., 403 (*f.n.*)  
 Brooke, Lieut. J. A. O., 268 (*f.n.*)  
 Bruner, Maj.-Gen. J. M. S., 482  
 Bryant, Captain F. C., accepts surrender of Togoland, 22  
 Buckland, Col. R. U. H., 477  
 Buckle, Major M. P., 214  
 Bulfin, Maj.-Gen. E. S., 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 252 (*f.n.*), 271, 272, 283, 289; formation of group, 293; 294, 295, 296, 297, 298 (and *f.n.*), 301, 313 (*f.n.*); appointed to command 1st Div., 324; 326, 331; counter-attack by force under, 31st Oct., 332; 346; force on 1st Nov., 356; wounded, 357; 358  
 Bulkeley-Johnson, Br.-Gen. C. B., 280, 288, 289, 291, 292, 479 (*f.n.*)  
 Bülow. *See* German Second Army  
 Buses, use of, 94  
 Byng, Maj.-Gen. Hon. J. H. G., 54 (*f.n.*), 105, 135, 137, 146, 250, 274, 280, 287, 337, 479, 498  
 Cadogan, Lieut.-Col. H. O. S., 289  
 Callwell, Maj.-Gen. C. E., 20 (*f.n.*)  
 Cameroons, operations in, 23  
 Campbell, Lieut.-Col. D. G. M., 304, 306  
 Canada, offer of contingent, 5; relieves Bermuda garrison, 9; despatch of Expeditionary Force, 9  
 Capper, Maj.-Gen. T., 49, 66, 115, 132, 134, 135, 144, 146, 155, 159, 162, 190, 197, 198, 201, 240, 245, 247, 250, 255, 265, 268, 296, 334, 336, 357, 358, 369, 370, 408, 478, 498, 499  
 Carnegie, Maj.-Gen. P. M., 216, 481  
 Carter, Major A. J., 185  
 Carter, Br.-Gen. F. C., 480  
 Casualties—  
 Belgian, between 15th and 25th Oct., 241  
 British, R.N.D. at Antwerp, 62 (*f.n.*); II. Corps, 13th Oct., 81; II. Corps, 14th and 15th Oct., 82; II. Corps, 12th to 15th Oct., 83; II. Corps, 16th to 18th Oct., 85; II. Corps, 21st Oct., 88; III. Corps, 13th Oct., 97; IV. Corps, 20th Oct., 146; I. Corps, 21st Oct., 164; II. Corps, October, 222; Indian Corps, October, 223; III. Corps, 15th to 31st Oct., 231; Battles of Ypres, 1914, 466; from beginning of campaign, 467  
 German, 23rd Oct., 188; 27th and 28th Oct., 228; 11th Nov., 444 (*f.n.*); Battles of Ypres, 1914, 467  
 Cator, Major A. B. E., 370  
 Cavan, Br.-Gen. F. R., Earl of, 156, 243, 271, 272, 294, 296, 297, 298 (*f.n.*), 323, 332, 333 (*f.n.*), 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 346, 356; takes over Bulfin's force, 357; 359 (*f.n.*), 361; detachment on 2nd Nov., 366; 374, 377, 383, 385, 389, 394, 395, 396, 399; reinforced 7th Nov., 400; 405, 406, 407, 408, 413, 414, 416, 422, 424, 425, 427, 451, 453, 456, 458, 459  
 Central Force, composition of, 5 (*f.n.*)  
 Charteris, Major J., 398, 525  
 Chenevix-Trench, Captain F. M., 324  
 Chetwode, Br.-Gen. Sir P. W., Bt., 351, 477  
 Christie-Miller, Captain E. G., 368  
 Churchill, Rt. Hon. Winston S., 16, 29; goes to Antwerp, 40; received by King Albert, 41; 42, 44; offers to assume command of British force, 46, 47; returns to England, 48; informed of Gen. Paris's decision to withdraw, 57  
 Clarke, Captain B. C. S., 322  
 Clarke, Major Travers E., 379 (*f.n.*)  
 Coast defence, German, 30 (*f.n.*)  
 Collin, Lieut.-Col. C., 481  
 Collins, Captain R. J., 318, 325

- Committee of Imperial Defence, 10; formation of "Offensive Sub-Committee", 20. *See also* War Cabinet
- Communication between units, difficulties of, 286 (*f.n.*), 290
- Communication, Lines of, British, 260
- Congreve, Br.-Gen. W. N., 111, 138, 139, 228, 463 (*f.n.*)
- Conneau, Gen., 69 (*f.n.*), 77, 78, 84 (*f.n.*), 89, 100, 102, 105, 109, 112, 119, 142, 151, 166, 167, 205, 207, 210, 211, 213, 217, 226, 361, 362, 363 (*f.n.*), 364, 382, 405, 412, 415; relieved by Gen. Allenby, 422
- Cook, Lieut.-Col. E. B., 232
- Cookson, Maj.-Gen. G. A., 484, 485
- Cottrell, Lieut. A. F. B., 455
- Cunliffe Owen, Col. C., 437
- Curzon, Earl, 11 (*f.n.*)
- Dallas, Col. A. G., 36, 37, 38
- Dalrymple, Major J. J., Viscount, 240
- Daniell, Major E. H. E., 86
- Dantant, Gen., 362, 410
- Davidson, Major S. R., 218
- Davies, Maj.-Gen. F. J., 449, 480
- Davies, Lieut.-Col. H. R., 337, 357, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444
- Dawnay, Major Hon. H., 396
- de Broqueville, Baron, 35, 36, 40
- de Castlenau, Gen., 69
- Defences, British at Ypres, 173, 176
- Deguisse, Gen., 32 (*f.n.*); 39, 44, 47, 55 (*f.n.*), 56; orders retirement of Belgian 2nd Div. and R.N.D., 57
- de Langle de Cary, Gen., 69
- de l'Espée, Gen., 345
- de Lisle, Maj.-Gen. H. de B., 68 (*f.n.*); 150, 153, 232, 280, 308, 309, 353, 365, 476
- de Mitry, Gen., 69, 70, 77, 84, 97, 100, 102, 106, 108, 109, 110, 116, 120, 131, 133, 145, 147, 148, 157, 162, 174, 193, 202, 235, 258, 275, 283, 344 (*f.n.*), 345 (*f.n.*), 359, 363 (*f.n.*), 386, 372, 405; composition of detachment, 411 (*f.n.*); 412, 417, 423, 445, 453, 456
- de Rougemont, Lieut.-Col. C. H., 479
- de Woillemont, Col., 311, 344 (*f.n.*), 346, 352, 356
- Dixmude, loss of, 10th Nov., 411
- Dobell, Br.-Gen. C. M., 20 (*f.n.*), 23
- Doran, Br.-Gen. B. J. C., 78
- Doran, Br.-Gen. W. R. B., 111
- Dossin, Gen., 55 (*f.n.*), 56
- Drake, Br.-Gen. B. F., 476
- Dubail, Gen., 69
- Dubois, Gen., 182, 188, 190, 192, 193, 235, 236, 242, 243, 253, 275, 276, 279, 283, 295, 297 (*f.n.*), 299; 325, 331, 344, 359, 365, 371, 376, 377, 379, 386, 400, 413, 423, 446, 453
- d'Urbal, Gen., assumes command of French forces in north, 147; orders attack for 22nd Oct., 174; orders attack for 23rd Oct., 183; appreciation 23rd Oct., 192; orders for 25th Oct., 285; 242; orders for 27th Oct., 252; 256, 258, 275, 278, 299, 301, 324, 342, 343, 344, 361; instructions for 2nd Nov., 363; 373, 376, 377, 380, 381; orders for 6th Nov., 387; 393, 397, 405, 410, 412, 440
- Earle, Lieut.-Col. M., 268
- Edwards, Br.-Gen. FitzJ. M., 485
- Egerton, Maj.-Gen. G. G. A., 463 (*f.n.*)
- Egerton, Br.-Gen. R. G., 481
- Engineers, Royal, shortage of stores, 154, 206, 210, 273, 275, 320, 354, 460; misuse of as infantry, 218 (*f.n.*); 222; S.R. and T.F. units in France in 1914, 486, 487
- Ennetières, loss of, 139
- Eychène, Lieut.-Col., 373, 460
- Fabeck, Gen. v., 125 (*f.n.*); composition of Group, 259; 262 (*f.n.*); attack by, 278; plans for 31st Oct., 303; 341, 347; evacuation of Messines, 348; 362, 375, 388 (*f.n.*), 391, 392, 417, 420, 450 (*f.n.*)
- Fairholme, Col. W. E., 36
- Falkenhayn, Lieut.-Gen. v., reasons for employing new formations in Flanders, 123; 223, 259, 391, 411
- Fanshawe, Maj.-Gen. H. D., 484
- Fanshawe, Br.-Gen. R., 177, 200, 244, 271, 272, 323, 341, 380, 437, 452
- Fasken, Br.-Gen. W. H., 484
- Fergusson, Maj.-Gen. Sir C., Bt., 85 (*f.n.*); 474
- Fiddes, Sir G. V., 20 (*f.n.*)



- Finch, Major H. M., 368, 369
- FitzClarence, Br.-Gen. C., 161, 243, 249, 264, 266, 272, 320, 321, 322, 323, 329, 330, 331, 332, 341, 369, 401, 408, 413, 421, 426, 428; 11th Nov., 432, 437, 438, 442; death of, 443
- Flying Corps, Royal, 96, 97, 101, 108, 118, 134, 136 (*f.n.*), 166, 177, 249, 256, 276, 281, 296, 342, 360, 372, 378, 387, 419, 450
- Foch, Gen., 70; appointed Commandant le Groupe des Armées du Nord, 76 (*f.n.*); proposal for defensive position, 83; 101; 103, 110; given direction of forces in the north, 127; plan for Allied Armies, 127; 128; orders offensive on 23rd Oct., 183; 192, 241, 276, 297 (and *f.n.*), 300; 325, 342; issues orders for 1st Nov., 343; 348; conference at Dunkirk, 349; 361, 362, 373, 378, 381, 393, 398, 399, 404, 411; promises to relieve I. Corps, 450; 460
- Fortune, Captain V. M., 408
- Foster, Major P. J., 334
- Fowke, Br.-Gen. G. H., 85, 457
- Fox, Lieut.-Col. R. F., 140
- Franchet d'Esperey, Gen., 69
- Fraser, Major Hon. H. J., 239
- French, Field-Marshal Sir J. D. P., ammunition requirements, 16 (*f.n.*); 28, 29, 42, 43, 65, 69, 70, 71, 76, 80, 82, 83, 87, 89, 95; meets Gen. Foch 15th Oct., 101; issues orders for general advance eastwards, 103; orders capture of La Bassée, 109; 128, 132, 136; orders for 20th Oct., 137; orders for 21st Oct., 148; 162; 168; telegram to Lord Kitchener, 22nd Oct., 172; 174, 183; reports results of 23rd Oct., 190; arranges relief of 1st Div. by French, 193; telegram asking for gun ammunition, 203; 205, 207, 210, 212, 215, 217; on use of R.E. in attack, 218 (*f.n.*); orders to III. Corps, 226, 229; sends reinforcements to III. Corps, 1st Nov., 231; telegram to Lord Kitchener, 24th Oct., 235; visits Gen. Foch, 241; optimistic telegram to London, 25th Oct., 241; 242, 248; reports situation to Lord Kitchener, 252; orders for 27th Oct., 252; 254, 255, 257; orders for 29th Oct., 262; meets Gen. Foch, 29th Oct., 276; orders for 30th Oct., and telegram to Lord Kitchener, 276; 278, 281, 296, 299; visits Gen. Foch, 31st Oct., 327; promises Gen. Haig reinforcements, 327 (*f.n.*); 340; visits Gen. Foch, 31st Oct., 342; telegram for ammunition, 31st Oct., 343; 349; reports events of 1st Nov., 360; visits Gen. Foch, 1st Nov., 361; reports situation to War Office 2nd Nov., 373; report to Lord Kitchener for 3rd Nov., 378; promised reinforcements, 378; orders for 5th Nov., 381; orders for 6th Nov., 387; report to War Office 7th Nov., 397; visits Gen. Foch, 8th Nov., 404; reports situation 8th Nov., 406; 410, 412, 423, 446, 450, 458, 519
- French Army, situation evening of, 11th Oct., 72; uniform, 78; co-operation with B.E.F., 90, 92 (Note II.); situation night 21st/22nd Oct., 166; 167; situation 22nd Oct., 182; general situation night 23rd/24th Oct., 190; forces opposing 23rd Oct., 191 (*f.n.*); counter-attack by IX. Corps 24th Oct., 192; situation night 24th/25th Oct., 202; coastal force 24th Oct., 203; situation morning 25th Oct., 234; situation night 26th/27th Oct., 251; situation night 28th/29th Oct., 258; distribution morning 30th Oct., 282; co-operation with B.E.F., 299; situation night 31st Oct./1st Nov., 345; situation evening 1st Nov., 359; loss of Spanbroekmolen, 381; distribution 6th Nov., 389; odds against 6th Nov., 390; failure 8th Nov., 405; loss of Dixmude, 10th Nov., 411; situation night 10th/11th Nov., 415; 11th Nov., 445; Order of Battle of the Détachement d'Armée de Belgique, 489
- French Naval Brigade. *See* Ronarc'h
- Furse, Col. W. T., 506
- Gage, Lieut.-Col. M. F., 479
- General Service Obligation, T.F. units which accepted, 3, 6



- German Army, troops engaged against Antwerp, 33; scheme of attack on Antwerp, 33; breaks through outer forts of Antwerp, 37; attempt to cross the Schelde, 45; enters Ghent, 66; operations 11th Oct., 72; position at Meteren, 97; occupies Ostend, 103; operations in Flanders 9th to 18th Oct., 121; on 20th Oct., 169; formation of new Prussian Reserve Corps (*see also* Reserve Corps), 123; on 19th Oct., 168; explanation of failure, 23rd Oct., 191; forces opposing 23rd Oct., 191 (*f.n.*); failure to follow up successful attack, 199; situation night 24th/25th Oct., 204; effort to break through II. Corps, 29th Oct., 220; forces opposed to II. Corps, Oct., 222; at La Bassée, 223; casualties, 27th and 28th Oct., 228; artillery at Ypres, 259; plans to break through, 24th to 30th Oct., 259; at Gheluvelt, 29th Oct., 277; distribution, morning 30th Oct., 282; misuse of artillery at Gheluvelt, 285 (*f.n.*); 30th Oct., 301; first use of observation balloons, 303; numerical superiority, 31st Oct., 343; 31st Oct., 347; operations, 1st Nov., 361; operations, 2nd Nov., 374; distribution, 6th Nov., according to British Intelligence, 387 (*f.n.*); odds in favour, 6th Nov., 390; ordered to push Ypres offensive, 391; distribution 8th Nov., 409; attacks N.E. of Ypres and takes Dixmude, 10th Nov., 411; situation night 10th/11th Nov., 415; renewal of offensive, 6th-10th Nov., 393; plans for 10th Nov., 417; casualties 11th Nov., 444 (*f.n.*); troops sent to Russia, 450 (*f.n.*); attack on French IX. Corps 12th Nov., 451; losses during Battles of Ypres, 467; Order of Battle of the Army in Flanders, 492
- First Army, 417
- Second Army, 259, 450 (*f.n.*)
- Fourth Army, 86, 98; new formation ordered, 121; 122, 125 (*f.n.*), 131; attack by,
- German Army (*continued*)—
- Fourth Army (*continued*)—
- first day, 138; 149, 168, 169, 170, 171, 195, 204, 230, 238, 242, 259, 282, 341, 360; re-organization of, 391; 413, 418, 420
- Sixth Army, 86, 98, 122, 125 (*f.n.*); attack by, first day, 138; 149, 169, 171, 195, 208, 223, 226, 228, 259, 283, 302 (*f.n.*); Kaiser visits H.Q., 316 (*f.n.*); 341, 391, 418, 420
- German Supreme Command. *See* O.H.L.
- Gerok, Gen. v., formation of Group, 388 (*f.n.*); 417 (*f.n.*)
- Gheluvelt, battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*); battle of, 262; first day, 262; second day, 278; loss of Zandvoorde, 285; loss of Hollebeke, 290; the crisis, 31st Oct., 303; attack on Messines, 304; attack on 2nd Cav. Div., 310; topography, 312; attack on 1st Div., 312; attack on chateau and counter-attack, 320; first news of loss of village, 325; counter-attack by 2nd Worcester-shire, 328
- Ghent, operations round, 64; Germans enter, 66
- G.H.Q. (*see also* French, F.-M. Sir J. D. P.), moves to St. Omer, 98; moves to Bailleul, 132; orders for 21st Oct., 157; operations section, summary night 21st/22nd Oct., 167; orders for Cav. Corps, 21st Oct., 231; orders for 25th Oct., 235; 244; informs Gen. Haig of intercepted German attack order for 29th Oct., 256; 274, 296; shortage of artillery ammunition, 354
- Gibbs, Captain J. E., 266
- Giffard, Captain R., 324
- Girouard, Col. Sir Percy, 41
- Givenchy, loss of, 81; retaken, 84
- Gleichen, Br.-Gen. A. E. W., Count, 78, 84, 90, 207 (*f.n.*), 384 (*f.n.*), 385, 389, 397, 401, 416, 425 (*f.n.*); attack on 11th Nov., 427; 454, 455
- Godley, Maj.-Gen. Sir A. J., 10
- Gordon, Br.-Gen. Hon. F., 71, 151
- Gordon, Captain R. S., 305
- Gough, Maj.-Gen. H. de la P., 68, 152, 153, 175, 232, 252 (*f.n.*), 280, 291, 292, 310, 311, 351, 476

- Gough, Br.-Gen. J. E., 183, 326, 379, 516, 523, 524  
 G.Q.G. *See* Joffre  
 Graham, Lieut.-Col. M. D., 200  
 Graham, Lieut.-Col. E. W. B., 337  
 Greenly, Lieut.-Col. W. H., 476  
 Grey, Sir Edward, Bt., informed of probable fall of Antwerp, 40  
 Grossetti, Gen., 147, 182, 193, 234, 380; appointed to command XVI. Corps, 399 (*f.n.*); 409  
 Guiette, Gen., 41  
 Guignabaudet, Gen., 188  
 Haig, Gen. Sir D., 136, 146; orders for 21st Oct., 157; 162, 163, 175, 177, 181; suggests postponement of offensive ordered for 23rd Oct., 183; 192, 193, 194, 199, 202, 236, 242, 243, 247, 249; orders redistribution of line, 27th Oct., 254; informed of intended German attack for 29th Oct., 256; orders for 29th Oct., 262, 264, 271, 274, 279, 288, 294, 295; 296, 297 (*f.n.*); informs G.H.Q. of orders for 31st Oct., 297; 299, 308, 318, 324, 325, 326, 327, 331, 332, 337, 342, 343, 357, 358, 366, 369, 371, 373, 374, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380; orders for 5th Nov., 382; 383, 396, 397, 398; reinforces Lord Cavan, 400; 401; visits Gen. Foch, 404; given authority to deal direct with Gen. d'Urbal, 404; orders for reorganization of line, 8th Nov., 408, 410; 423, 426, 430, 432, 439, 440, 443; reports danger of situation, night 11th/12th Nov., 446; 450; 451, 452, 453; promoted, 460; 473  
 Haking, Br.-Gen. R. C. B., 198 (*f.n.*)  
 Haldane, Maj.-Gen. J. A. L., 83 (*f.n.*), 96, 106, 107  
 Haldane, Viscount, 16  
 Hamilton, Maj.-Gen. H. I. W., killed 14th Oct., 82; 474  
 Hamilton, Lieut. J. M., 358 (*f.n.*)  
 Hankey, Major E. B., 322, 323, 328, 329  
 Hankey, Sir Maurice, 11  
 Harington, Major C. H., 504, 510  
 Harper, Col. G. M., 423, 511, 513, 521, 522, 526  
 Harvey, Lieut.-Col. R. N., 36  
 Headlam, Br.-Gen. J. E. W., 91, 363 (*f.n.*), 422  
 Hély d'Oissel, Gen., detachment formed, 253; 258, 279, 363 (*f.n.*); composition of detachment, 411 (*f.n.*), 412, 417  
 Henderson, Rt. Hon. A., 11 (*f.n.*)  
 Henderson, Commodore W., 58; crosses Dutch frontier, 61  
 Henderson, Br.-Gen. Sir D., 252 (*f.n.*), 476  
 Hesse, Prince Max of, 96  
 Heyworth, Br.-Gen. F. J., 478  
 Hickie, Br.-Gen. W. B., 78, 80 (*f.n.*)  
 High explosive shell, 18-pdr., first usc, 331, 340 (*f.n.*)  
 Hindenburg, Gen. v., losses in Russia, 375  
 Hogan, Sgt. J., 221 (*f.n.*)  
 Holland, Br.-Gen. A. E. A., 480  
 Hollebeke, 153, 155, 177  
 Hollen, Gen. v., 70 (*f.n.*); superseded by Marwitz, 154 (*f.n.*); 169  
 Home, Lieut.-Col. A. F., 476  
 Hood, Rear-Admiral Hon. H. L. A., 118; 300  
 Horne, Maj.-Gen. H. S., 252 (*f.n.*), 453  
 Hoskins, Col. A. R., 478  
 Howell, Major P., 311  
 Hudson, Br.-Gen. H., 481  
 Hull, Lieut.-Col. C. P. A., 209  
 Humbert, Gen., 258, 282, 345; makes no progress 1st Nov., 360; 372, 386; composition of detachment, 411 (*f.n.*); 412, 445, 452, 453, 456  
 Hunter-Weston, Maj.-Gen., 105, 149, 150, 230, 252 (*f.n.*), 366, 402, 406  
 Hussey, Br.-Gen. A. H., 477  
 Imperial War Committee. *See* War Cabinet  
 India, co-operation of, 8  
 Indian Army, officers detained by Lord Kitchener, 2. *See also* under Cavalry, Corps, Divisions, Infantry  
 Ingouville-Williams, Br.-Gen. E. C., 111, 141, 228  
 Intelligence, British, 18th Oct., 118; 133 (*f.n.*), 136, 147, 157, 281, 340 (*f.n.*); message announcing Kaiser's visit to Courtrai intercepted, 348; summary issued 6th Nov. showing German distribution, 387 (*f.n.*); report on 8th Nov., 409; report on 10th Nov., 412  
 Inundation, Yser, 257

- Jackson, Admiral Sir H. B., 20 (*f.n.*)  
 Jackson, Br.-Gen. H. K., 478  
 Jacob, Col. C. W., 482  
 Jaudwine, Col. H. S., 335, 336, 337  
 Joffre, Marshal, 27, 28, 29, 37, 42, 65; issues instructions, 7th Oct., 69; visits Sir J. French, 168; conference at Dunkirk, 349; 381; appreciation of situation 9th Nov., 411; suggests entrenched camp to cover ports, 457  
 Johnson, Br.-Gen. C. E., 482  
 Johnson, Br.-Gen. F. E., 481  
 Jones, Lieut.-Col. L. C., 485
- Kaiser Wilhelm, 302; at Sixth Army H.Q., 316 (*f.n.*); expected at Courtrai, 348; orders capture of Douve Farm, 355 (*f.n.*); reported to have left Western front, 375  
 Kavanagh, Br.-Gen. C. T. McM., 155, 280, 286, 395, 479  
 Keary, Maj.-Gen. H. D'U., 483  
 Keir, Maj.-Gen. J. L., 111, 112, 475  
 Kenny, Dr. W., 189 (*f.n.*)  
 Kerr, Col. F. W., 324, 518  
 Kilby, Captain A. F. G., 372  
 King, Lieut.-Col. C. A. C., 290  
 Kitchener, Field-Marshal Earl, call for first 100,000, 3; 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 25, 36, 37, 40; instructs Gen. Rawlinson to cover withdrawal from Antwerp, 64; 172; telegraphs thanks of Government to B.E.F., 25th Oct., 242; promises reinforcements, 252; 276; notifies Sir J. French of reinforcements, 276 (*f.n.*); promises six territorial battalions, 344; visits French President, Gens. Joffre and Foch, 349; 373; asks Sir J. French to ascertain Gen. Joffre's plans, 410; 497, 498, 519  
 Kluck, Gen. v., 417  
 Kruseecke, topography, 239; loss of salient, 242
- La Bassée, II. Corps advance to, 68; battle of, 77, 205; official date, 77 (*f.n.*); topography, 78, 206; artillery observation, 79; troops opposing II. Corps, 79; battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*); general situation 23rd-25th Oct., 205; end of battle, 221; Germans at, 223  
 Lagarde, Comdt., 401, 407, 408  
 Lambton, Br.-Gen. Hon. W., 349
- Landon, Maj.-Gen. H. J. S., 159 (and *f.n.*), 160, 252 (*f.n.*), 254, 269, 271, 272, 313, 315, 318, 319 (*f.n.*), 324, 325, 331, 332, 358, 368, 369, 408, 437, 439, 440, 443, 446  
 Langemarek, battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*); battle of, 154, 172; defences of, 173 (*f.n.*), 179 (*f.n.*)  
 Lanquetot, Gen., 373, 410  
 Laperrine, Gen., 295, 371  
 Lawford, Br.-Gen. S. T. B., 134, 135, 155, 156, 247, 288, 301, 334; counter-attack at Zwarteleen, 397; 400, 478  
 Leach, Lieut.-Col. H. E. B., 315, 321  
 Leach, 2/Lieut. J., 221 (*f.n.*)  
 Leader, Br.-Gen. H. P., 484  
 Lecky, Br.-Gen. R. St. C., 484  
 Lefèvre, Gen., 452, 453  
 Le Gheer, loss and recapture of, 149  
 Le Maisnil, fighting at, 151  
 Leslie, Lieut.-Col. G. A. J., 484  
 Light-ball pistols, 211; first consignment reaches B.E.F., 452  
 Lille, fall of, 73, 97  
 Linsingen, Gen. v., formation of group, 417; 418, 420; goes to Russia, 450 (*f.n.*)  
 Littlejohns, Lieut.-Comdr. A. S., 36 (*f.n.*), 43, 165  
 Lloyd George, Rt. Hon. D., 16  
 Lomax, Maj.-Gen. S. H., 159, 161, 179, 181, 249, 250, 252 (*f.n.*), 268, 274, 322, 323, 324, 473  
 Loring, Lieut.-Col. W. L., 197  
 Lovett, Lieut.-Col. A. C., 267, 324, 330, 331, 383, 386, 396, 407 (*f.n.*)  
 Lowry Cole, Br.-Gen. A. W. G., 480  
 Luard, Lieut.-Col. F. W., 61  
 Lucas, Lord, 16  
 Ludendorff, Gen., criticism of new Prussian Reserve Corps, 124  
 Lushington, Lieut.-Col. S., 328  
 Lys, river, advance to, 100; valley, Froissart's description, 104 (*f.n.*)
- Macandrew, Br.-Gen. H. J. M., 484  
 Macbean, Maj.-Gen. F., 483  
 McCracken, Br.-Gen. F. W. N., 207 (*f.n.*), 211, 214, 215, 217, 218, 384 (*f.n.*), 385, 389, 397, 401, 416, 421, 425 (and *f.n.*); attack on 11th Nov., 427, 430, 454  
 MacEwen, Lieut.-Col. D. L., 181, 187  
 McKenna, Rt. Hon. R., 16  
 Mackenzie, Maj.-Gen. Colin J., assumes command 3rd Div., 83 (*f.n.*); 88, 217; invalidated, 220 (*f.n.*); 474 (*f.n.*)



- McMahon, Br.-Gen. N. R., 212, 213, 215, 429 (*f.n.*)
- Macready, Lieut.-Gen. Sir C. F. N., 466
- Maison-Rouge, Gen., 295, 311, 371, 400
- Maistre, Gen., 91
- Makins, Br.-Gen. E., 479
- Malcolm, Lieut.-Col. G. A., 308, 350, 424
- Malcolm, Major N., 327
- Marine Corps, German, equipment, 123 (*f.n.*)
- Marker, Col. R. J., 379
- Marshall, Lieut.-Col. H. J. M., 485
- Martin Leake, Lieut. A., 403 (*f.n.*)
- Martyn, Lieut.-Col. A., 80 (*f.n.*), 207 (*f.n.*), 422 (*f.n.*)
- Marwitz, Gen. v. d., 70; supersedes Gen. v. Hollen, 154; 233 (*f.n.*)
- Maude, Br.-Gen. F. S., 207 (*f.n.*), 214, 215
- Maud'huy, Gen., 69, 71; promises support to Gen. Smith-Dorrien, 92; 210, 258
- Maunoury, Gen., 69
- May, Pte. H., 227 (*f.n.*)
- Mazel, Gen., 362, 364, 365, 409
- Medical arrangements, Oct. and Nov., 469
- Menin, advance on, 115; 132
- Mercer, Br.-Gen. H. F., 481
- Messines, occupation of, 98; battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*); description of ridge, 129; battle of, 152, 231; first attack fails, 306; attack on, 304; evacuation of, 348
- Meteren, capture of, 96; German position at, 97
- Milne, Br.-Gen. G. F., 227
- Milner, Viscount, 11 (*f.n.*)
- Minenwerfer, first sight of, 340
- Monro, Maj.-Gen. C. C., 158, 159, 175 (*f.n.*), 188, 198, 244, 253, 254, 256, 271; 272, 274, 322, 323, 324, 332, 371, 372, 377, 413, 437, 440, 446, 452, 453, 463 (*f.n.*), 473
- Mont des Cats, fight on, 95
- Montgomery, Lieut.-Col. A. A., 505
- Montgomery, Col. H. M. de F., 335, 478, 513
- Montgomery, Br.-Gen. R. A. K., 183, 477, 512
- Montrésor, Lieut.-Col. I. B., 399
- Moore, Lieut.-Col. A. T., 478
- Morel, Gen., 400
- Morland, Lieut.-Col. C. B., 314, 315, 321 (*f.n.*), 330
- Morland, Maj.-Gen. T. L. N., 85 (*f.n.*); 459, 474 (*f.n.*)
- Moussy, Gen., 295, 324, 332, 343, 345, 346; detachment, 356; 363 (and *f.n.*); 365, 366, 373, 376, 393, 394, 395, 396, 398, 399, 404, 405, 406, 410, 416 (*f.n.*), 423, 424, 425 (*f.n.*), 428, 432, 440, 451, 456
- Mowatt, Sir Francis, 12
- Mullens, Br.-Gen. R. J., 68 (*f.n.*), 219, 476
- Munitions, 11; system of providing, 12; estimated capacity of factories on outbreak of war, 13; Cabinet Committee formed, 16; work of Cabinet Committee on, 25
- Murray, Lieut.-Gen. Sir A. J., 241
- Murray, Major J. T. C., 270 (*f.n.*)
- Musketry, British, effect of, 175, 178 (*f.n.*), 179, 233; on 30th Oct., 285; at Zandvoorde, 290; 316, 347, 462
- Nanton, Col. H. C., 481
- Nauru, wireless station destroyed by Navy, 24 (*f.n.*)
- Naval Division, Royal. *See* Infantry
- Navy, destroys wireless stations at Yap and Nauru, 24 (*f.n.*); supports Belgians, at Battle of Yser, 118; shells Germans, 300; lends observation balloon, 303 (*f.n.*)
- Neuve Chapelle, loss of, 211; counter-attack, 216
- New Army, constitution of and call for first 100,000, 3; housing and equipping of, 17
- New Guinea, German, operations in, 24
- New Zealand, offer of contingent, 5; 9; despatch of Expeditionary Force, 10; expedition to Samoa, 24
- Nigerian Marine, 23
- Night attacks, German, 82, 86; 156, 206, 209, 232, 239, 256, 310, 311, 340, 386, 408
- Nonne Bosschen, battle boundaries, 125 (*f.n.*); battle of, 419
- Norie, Lieut.-Col. C. E. de M., 223



- O.H.L., telegram to von Beseler, 51; orders Sixth Army to assume defensive, 98; orders formation of Fourth Army, 121; reasons for employing new formations in Flanders, 123; plan of campaign in Oct., 128; unprepared for withdrawal of II. Corps, 206; 223; orders formation of new Army Group, 27th Oct., 259; 282, 301; contemplates withdrawal of troops from Flanders, 372; decides to push Ypres offensive, 391; 422; communique for 11th Nov., 447; ignorance of Allied strength at Battles of Ypres, 463
- O'Leary, Col. T. E., 481
- Oliver, Rear-Admiral H. F., 36, 38
- Olleris, Gen., 343; formation of detachment, 363 (*f.n.*); 365, 376, 377, 393, 394, 398, 405, 409, 410, 416
- Ollivant, Lieut.-Col. A. H., 58, 60
- Osmanney, Captain R., 324
- Osborne Smith, Lieut.-Col. E., 181
- Ostend, occupied by Germans, 103
- Pacific, operations in, 23, 24
- Paley, Major G., 324
- Paris, Br.-Gen. A., succeeds Gen. Aston, 30; 41, 42; assumes command of R.N.D., 44; 45, 47, 48, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60
- Parker, Major G. H., 230
- Pau, Gen., 65
- Payner, Lieut.-Col., 295, 333, 334
- Paynter, Captain G. C. B., 358 (*f.n.*)
- Pearce Serocold, Lieut.-Col. E., 271, 272, 313, 317
- Pell, Lieut.-Col. B. T., 185, 315, 317
- Perceval, Lieut.-Col. E. M., 324
- Percival, Lieut.-Col. A. J.-B., 324
- Pereira, Lieut.-Col. C. E., 271, 323, 386, 413, 414, 437
- Phillips, Col. G. F., 422 (*f.n.*)
- Pinney, Br.-Gen. R. J., 480
- Pirie, Maj.-Gen. C. P. W., 484
- Plettenberg, Gen. Baron v., composition of corps, 413, 417, 418
- Polygon Wood, loss and recapture of, 195
- Prêmesques, loss of, 141
- Pritchard, Major H. L., 187 (*f.n.*), 356
- Prowse, Major C. B., 230
- Pulteney, Maj.-Gen. W. P., 94; issues orders for advance on 13th Oct., 96; 98, 99; issues orders for securing Lys bridges, 101; 106, 110, 149, 225, 231, 355, 379, 403, 475
- Race to the sea, 69, 98, 126
- Radcliffe, Major P. de B., 526
- Railway Triangle, 85
- Railways, routes taken by British traffic during Ypres 1914, 260; railheads, 260
- Rasch, Captain G. E. C., 358 (*f.n.*)
- Rawlinson, Lieut.-Gen. Sir H. S., commands British force in Antwerp, 46; returns to Bruges, 47; 50, 51, 56, 57, 64, 65, 67, 72, 77, 103, 105, 115, 132, 133, 144, 146, 154, 155, 157, 162, 248; returns to England, 254; 459, 477, 497, 511
- Recruiting, brake put on, 4
- Reinforcements, arrival of, 210, 222
- Rendle, Bandsman T. E., 459 (*f.n.*)
- Requin, Comdt., 397
- Reserve Corps, German, first news of, 119; Note on, 123; Intelligence Summary, 136; French notice of, 147 (*f.n.*); Sir J. French's opinion, 157; 168
- Rice, Br.-Gen. S. R., 265, 326, 327, 377, 398
- Richtofen, Gen. v., 70
- Rifle grenades, first consignment reaches B.E.F., 381; 409
- Rimington, Lieut.-Gen. M. F., 484
- Roberts, Field-Marshal Earl, 457
- Rolt, Br.-Gen. S. P., 78
- Ronarc'h, Admiral, 42; composition of force under, 51; 66, 117, 133, 146, 258
- Roper, Major R. T., 80
- Rotheram, Lieut.-Col. W. H., 480
- Rouse, Lieut.-Col. H., 484
- Rowan, Captain P. S., 212
- Ruggles-Brise, Br.-Gen. H. G., 239, 240, 246, 247, 263, 267, 268, 334, 370, 463 (*f.n.*), 478
- Runciman, Rt. Hon. W., 16
- Rupprecht, Crown Prince of Bavaria, 224, 259, 301, 360, 391, 392; orders for 11th Nov., 420
- Samoa, surrender of Apia, 24
- Samson, Comdr. C. R., 29, 30, 132, 144
- Sandbach, Maj.-Gen. A. E., 217

- Sappers and Miners. *See* Engineers
- Sarrail, Gen., 69
- Schreiber, Lieut.-Col. A. L., 326, 327 (*f.n.*)
- Scott, Br.-Gen. A. B., 482
- Shaw, Br.-Gen. F. C., 78, 208 (*f.n.*), 211, 213, 214, 216, 217, 222, 297 (*f.n.*), 298; reinforces 1st Cav. Div., 307; 346, 351, 384 (*f.n.*), 390, 397, 401, 416, 421, 426; attack on 11th Nov., 428; wounded, 430; 434, 437, 444, 445, 454, 455
- Shedden, Captain G. P., 324
- Smillie, Mr. R., 17 (*f.n.*)
- Smith, Lieut.-Col. E. O., 337
- Smith, Lieut.-Col. W. D., 429; succeeds Gen. Shaw, 430; 455
- Smith, Lieut.-Col. W. E. B., 352
- Smith-Dorrien, Gen. Sir H. L., 68, 70, 71, 77, 80, 83; selects reserve line, 89; receives promise of support from Gen. Maud'huy, 92; 207; visits G.H.Q., 210; orders for 28th Oct., 217; 221; 449, 450, 474
- Spanbroekmolen, loss of, 381
- Stansfeld, Captain J. R. E., 337
- Stevenson, Major C. J., 440
- Stewart, Lieut. H. W. V., 198
- Straker, Lieut. G. H., 327
- Strong points, 377, 403, 421, 426, 431, 433, 435, 436, 438
- Sydenham, Captain E. G., 288 (*f.n.*)
- Taverna, Gen., 344, 352
- Taylor, Lieut.-Col. R. O'B., 484
- Territorial Force, General Service obligation, 3; strength in Aug. 1914, 5; Second and Third Line, 6; first division to leave United Kingdom, 7; first battalion in action, 308; R.E. and Infantry units with B.E.F. in 1914, 487
- Thorne, Captain A. F. A. N., 320, 323
- Togoland, operations in, 22
- Tools, entrenching, lack of. *See* Engineers, Royal
- Topography, 73; coast zone, 74; Flanders, general, 74; Lens coal area, 75; La Bassée, 78; Lys basin, 104; ground east of Armentières (Pérenchies and Aubers ridge), 107; Yser basin, 117; Messines ridge, 129; country round Ypres, 128; Ypres ridge, 184; La Bassée, 206; neighbourhood of Gheluvelt, 312
- Train, armoured, naval, 36 (*f.n.*), 210, 256
- Trench mortars, none available, 406
- Tsingtao, British contingent at, 10 (*f.n.*)
- Turkey, outbreak of war with, 9
- Twining, Lieut.-Col. P. G., 482
- Tyler, Major A. H., 443
- United Kingdom, denuded of regular troops, 3
- United States of America, asked to tender for munitions, 25
- Urach, Lieut.-Gen. Duke of, formation of group, 388 (*f.n.*)
- Vallentin, Captain J. F., 400
- Van de Weyer, Major B. G., 314
- Vaughan, Br.-Gen. J., 477
- Veldhoek, attack on, 330
- Very pistols. *See* Light-ball pistols
- Vidal, Gen., 279, 366, 369, 371, 376, 377, 380, 393; placed in command of detachments Olleris and Moussy, 405; 410 (*f.n.*), 416 (*f.n.*); on 11th Nov., 422; 440, 445, 453
- Villiers, Sir Francis, 35; informed of probable fall of Antwerp, 40
- von Donop, Maj.-Gen. Sir S., 25
- Wadeson, Br.-Gen. F. W. G., 485
- Wake, Major H., 499
- Wales, H.R.H. the Prince of, joins B.E.F., 458 (*f.n.*)
- War Cabinet, formation of, 10, 11; composition of, 11 (*f.n.*)
- Warren, Major G. E., 358 (*f.n.*)
- Watkis, Lieut.-Gen. H. B. B., 89, 206, 207, 481
- Watson, Major C. F., 186, 315, 317
- Watts, Br.-Gen. H. E., 178, 197, 478
- Westmacott, Lieut.-Col. C. B., 198, 339, 436, 437, 440, 443, 444, 445
- Whigham, Col. R. D., 322, 324, 519
- Willcocks, Lieut.-Gen. Sir J., 217, 221, 481
- Willoughby, Col. M. E., 485
- Wilson, Lieut.-Col. C. S., 427
- Wilson, Lieut.-Col. G. C., 306
- Wilson, Maj.-Gen. H. F. M., 114, 142, 149, 252 (*f.n.*), 298, 355, 366, 403, 475, 504
- Wilson, Major S. H., 20 (*f.n.*)

- Winckler, Gen. v., 392, 417
- Wing, Maj.-Gen. F. D. V., 83 (*f.n.*), 213; assumes command of 3rd Div., 220 (*f.n.*); 252 (*f.n.*), 397, 401, 408, 413, 414, 416, 430, 439, 446; strength of composite division on 15th Nov., 449; attacked 13th Nov., 453; attacked 14th Nov., 454; 459, 474 (*f.n.*)
- Württemberg, Duke Albrecht of, 121, 204, 259, 392
- Wytshaete, attack on, 31st Oct., 310; 1st Nov., 349; loss of, 362
- Yap, wireless station destroyed by Navy, 24 (*f.n.*)
- Yeomanry, units arriving in France in 1914, 486. *See also* Cavalry
- Ypres, Battles of, review of events leading to, 76; battle boundaries, 125 (and *f.n.*); arrival of I. Corps, 146; 234; railway routes used by B.E.F. during, 260; railheads during, 260; close of, 447; retrospect, 460
- Yser, description of basin, 117; battle of, 117, 126; inundation, 299

# INDEX TO ARMS, FORMATIONS AND UNITS

## Artillery—

### Batteries, Field—

9th—159; 11th—81; 12th—289; 15th—380; 25th—156; 41st—88; 46th—159, 162, 441; 47th—244; 49th—340 (*f.n.*); 52nd—365; 54th—331, 441, 455; 60th—244, 380; 65th (How.)—90; 70th—254, 340, 386; 105th—287; 106th—287; 115th—458; 116th—341, 368, 458; 117th—341; 128th (How.)—88, 213

### Batteries, Garrison (Heavy)—

26th—185; 35th—324, 439; 108th—363 (*f.n.*); 111th—135; 112th—135, 197

### Batteries, Garrison (Siege)—

2nd—90; 7th—36 (*f.n.*); 8th—36 (*f.n.*)

### Batteries, Horse—

D—95; E—310; H—310; J—310; I—306; Warwickshire—276 (*f.n.*)

### Brigades (Field)—

XII.—141, 151; XIV.—96; XV.—363 (*f.n.*), 365; XVIII.—216; XXII.—134; XXV.—158 (*f.n.*), 162, 180, 185, 197, 249, 266 (*f.n.*), 336; XXVI.—185, 249, 266 (*f.n.*), 272, 341, 399; XXVIII.—363 (*f.n.*); XXXIV.—200, 408; XXXV.—156; XXXVIII.—71, 139, 140; XXXIX.—313, 330, 441; XL.—340 (*f.n.*); XLI.—328, 439; XLII.—219; XLIII.—185, 213; XLIV. (How.)—200

### Brigades, Horse—

XIV.—247, 272

## Artillery (*continued*)—

### Divisional—

1st—266, 367, 397, 401, 428, 429, 431  
2nd—439  
3rd—415, 450 (*f.n.*), 459  
4th—150, 305, 354  
5th—91, 363 (*f.n.*), 382, 415, 422, 450 (*f.n.*)  
7th—245, 266, 333, 400, 424

## Cavalry—

### Brigades—

1st—143, 232, 280, 304, 307, 308; casualties 31st Oct., 309; 346, 354, 365, 452  
2nd—99 (*f.n.*), 115, 152, 162, 215, 217, 219, 220, 232, 250, 258, 280, 304, 305, 309 (*f.n.*), 310, 346, 354, 365  
3rd—95, 99 (*f.n.*), 104, 153, 232, 280, 291, 304, 311, 346, 353, 362  
4th—99 (*f.n.*), 153, 232, 280, 304, 308, 310, 311, 346, 350, 351, 353, 395 (*f.n.*)  
5th—99 (*f.n.*), 143, 153, 232, 280, 346, 351, 353  
6th—54 (*f.n.*), 132, 134, 135, 153, 155, 176, 177, 190 (*f.n.*), 280, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 295, 325, 330, 331, 337, 357, 380, 383, 385, 389, 397, 424, 427  
7th—54 (*f.n.*), 132, 134, 135, 155, 156, 177, 190 (*f.n.*), 251, 280, 283, 286, 288, 289, 290, 311, 325, 357, 370, 390, 395; casualties 6th Nov., 396; 397, 427, 446  
8th—54 (*f.n.*)

Corps. See Corps, British



## 540 INDEX TO ARMS, FORMATIONS AND UNITS

### Cavalry (*continued*)—

#### Divisions—

1st—68, 71, 72, 95, 99 (*f.n.*), 104, 109, 120, 144, 150, 152, 153, 222, 231, 240, 250, 280, 283, 292, 296, 298, 297, 303, 304, 308, 309 (*f.n.*), 310, 346, 353, 354, 363, 365, 374, 422, 446, 452; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

2nd—68, 70, 71, 72, 95, 99 (*f.n.*), 104, 109, 120, 132, 144, 145, 152, 153, 154 (*f.n.*), 155, 166, 175, 231, 232, 240, 250, 251, 275, 280, 283, 290, 295, 296, 297, 298, 303, 308, 309 (*f.n.*), 310 (and *f.n.*); casualties 28th-31st Oct., 312; 346, 351, 353, 363, 459; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

3rd—21 (*f.n.*), 36, 42, 54, 55, 64, 65, 66, 67, 72, 99, 100, 102, 104, 105, 107, 115, 116, 120, 121, 131, 132, 133, 134; casualties 19th Oct., 135; 137, 145, 146, 148, 154, 157, 158, 168, 170, 182 (*f.n.*), 190, 201, 202, 204; placed under Cav. Corps, 232; 240, 248, 250; transferred to Cav. Corps, 252; 253, 254, 274, 280, 283, 285, 293, 294, 295, 296, 298, 325, 343, 347, 357, 363, 369, 373, 400, 407, 410, 416; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

#### Regiments—

##### Household Cavalry—

1st Life Guards, 280, 286, 311, 395

2nd Life Guards, 280, 286, 357, 395, 396

Royal Horse Guards, 247, 251, 280, 286, 395, 396

Composite Regiment of, 232, 349, 351

##### Cavalry of the Line—

Dragoon Guards, 2nd (The Queen's Bays), 292 (*f.n.*), 304, 306, 307

—, 3rd (Prince of Wales's), 54 (*f.n.*), 385, 424

—, 4th (Royal Irish), 153, 219, 304, 305, 309

—, 5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's), 292 (*f.n.*), 304, 305

### Cavalry (*continued*)—

#### Regiments (*continued*)—

##### Cavalry of the Line (*continued*)—

Dragoon Guards, 6th (The Carabiniers), 350

Dragoons, 1st (Royal), 54 (*f.n.*), 177, 280, 289, 290, 291, 337, 338, 357, 385, 424

—, 2nd (Royal Scots Greys), 280

Hussars, 3rd (King's Own), 351

—, 4th (Queen's Own), 95, 104, 250, 311

—, 7th (Queen's Own), 423

—, 10th (Prince of Wales's Own Royal), 54 (*f.n.*), 67, 134, 337, 385, 424

—, 11th (Prince Albert's Own), 292 (*f.n.*), 304, 305, 306

—, 15th (The King's), 327

—, 18th (Queen Mary's Own), 219, 304, 309 (*f.n.*), 310

—, 19th (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal), 355

—, 20th, 351, 352

Lancers, 5th (Royal Irish), 95

—, 9th (Queen's Royal), 150, 153, 219, 304, 306, 309

—, 12th (Prince of Wales's Royal), 351, 352, 361, 365

—, 16th (The Queen's), 95

##### Special Reserve—

South Irish Horse, 175

##### Yeomanry—

Leicestershire, 54 (*f.n.*), 276 (*f.n.*), 378 (*f.n.*), 446

Northamptonshire, 449 (*f.n.*)

Northumberland (Hussars), 3 (*f.n.*), 155, 197, 299, 337, 370, 378 (*f.n.*)

Oxfordshire (Hussars), 7 (*f.n.*), 28, 46, 298, 309, 346, 365, 378 (*f.n.*)

Somerset, North, 54 (*f.n.*), 276 (*f.n.*), 378 (*f.n.*)

##### Corps, British—

##### Cavalry Corps—formation of, 68,

71, 72, 76, 77, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99; to reconnoitre the Lys, 100;

101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109; operations on 18th

Oct., 115; 120, 125 (*f.n.*), 131, 135, 136, 137, 141, 143, 147,

148, 150, 151; at Messines, 152; 166, 167, 172, 183, 207,

213, 222, 225, 227, 229, 230, 231; situation on morning of

231; situation on morning of

Corps, British (*continued*)—

Cavalry Corps (*continued*)—

23rd Oct., 232; 3rd Cav. Div. placed under orders of, 232; 233 (*f.n.*), 234, 235; on 25th Oct., 240; 247; on 26th Oct., 250; 252, 254; on 27th and 28th Oct., 257; 258, 273; 29th Oct., 274; 275, 279, 280, 281, 295, 296, 297, 298, 308, 325, 333, 343, 344, 345, 346, 349, 381, 382, 383 (*f.n.*), 384 (*f.n.*), 385, 388, 416, 422, 450 (*f.n.*), 459; position on 22nd Nov., 460

I. Corps—52, 71 (*f.n.*), 72, 87, 99, 100 (*f.n.*), 102, 109, 120, 132; ordered to Ypres, 136; 138, 144; arrival at Ypres, 146; 149, 154, 155, 156, 157, 160, 162; situation on night 21st October, 163; at Battle of Langemarck, 157; casualties on 21st October, 164; 165, 166, 167, 168, 173 (*and f.n.*), 174, 177, 178, 183, 184, 186, 188, 191 (*f.n.*), 192, 202, 210, 235, 237, 252, 258; at Gheluvelt, 269; 275, 276, 277, 279, 280, 281, 286, 295, 297, 298, 308, 318, 324, 325; issues orders for last stand, 31st Oct., 326; 332, 335, 336, 337, 343, 345, 363, 373, 374, 379, 384 (*f.n.*), 385, 386, 390, 407, 409, 410, 420, 421, 422, 445, 446, 450 (*f.n.*), 453; relief of, on 15th Nov., 458; position on 22nd Nov., 460

II. Corps—46, 52, 65, 66; advance to La Bassée, 68; 72, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80; casualties 13th Oct., 81; casualties on 14th and 15th Oct., 82; casualties 12th to 15th Oct., 83; casualties 16th to 18th Oct., 85; 86, 87; casualties 21st Oct., 88; retires to reserve line, 89; 91 (*f.n.*), 95, 98, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 109, 119; casualties between 9th and 18th Oct., 121; 122, 125 (*f.n.*), 136, 137, 148, 151, 166, 167, 172, 205, 206, 207, 208; composition of brigades on 24th Oct., 207, 208 (*f.n.*); 209, 210, 212, 216, 217, 220; relieved by Indian Corps, 221; casualties during October fighting, 222; 223, 224, 226, 228, 231, 235, 250, 252, 257, 258,

Corps, British (*continued*)—

II. Corps (*continued*)—

259, 276, 297, 307, 344, 351, 383, 388, 397, 409, 413, 415, 416, 421, 425, 427, 430; ordered to relieve I. Corps, 13th Nov., 450; 459; position on 22nd Nov., 460

III. Corps—52, 71, 72, 76, 77, 80, 83, 86, 94, 95; orders for advance on 13th Oct., 96; casualties on 13th Oct., 97; 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, 119; casualties between 9th and 18th Oct., 121; 122, 125 (*f.n.*), 131, 135; H.Q. moved forward to Armentières, 136; 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 166, 167, 172, 205, 206, 207, 222, 224, 225, 226, 228, 229; casualties 15th-31st Oct., 231; 234, 235, 252, 258, 259, 279, 298, 355, 363, 379, 392, 409, 415, 459; position on 22nd Nov., 460

IV. Corps—placed under Sir J. French, 65; operations round Ghent, 64; 67, 72, 94, 98; included in orders for B.E.F., 103; 105, 106, 107, 109; moves towards Menin, 18th October, 115; 120, 131, 132, 134, 136, 137, 144, 145 (*f.n.*); casualties on 20th Oct., 146; 147; at Battle of Langemarck, 154; 155, 157, 162, 167, 173, 174, 176, 177, 183, 184, 189, 191 (*f.n.*), 192, 231; 3rd Cav. Div. placed under Cav. Corps, 232; 235; broken up, 459; position on 22nd Nov., 460

Indian Corps—composition and embarkation of, 92; 120, 168, 207, 217; relieves II. Corps, 221; 222; casualties during October, 223; 224, 258, 276, 344, 383 (*f.n.*), 384, 392, 415, 450 (*f.n.*), 457, 459; position on 22nd Nov., 460; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

Cyclists, 2nd Divl., 403; 7th Divl., 155, 370

Divisions (British)—

1st—102, 109, 120, 146, 148, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162; situation on night of 21st Oct., 163;

## 542 INDEX TO ARMS, FORMATIONS AND UNITS

### Divisions (British) (*continued*)—

173, 174, 179, 180, 181, 182 (*f.n.*), 184; casualties 23rd Oct., 187; 193, 195, 202, 203, 234, 236, 242, 243, 245, 248, 249, 250, 252, 254, 255, 256, 258, 262 (*f.n.*), 263, 268, 269, 271, 273, 274, 277, 280, 283, 284, 288, 295, 297 (*f.n.*), 298, 313, 318, 320, 322; catastrophe to staff, 323; 325, 326, 327, 329, 330; casualties 31st Oct., 339; 341, 347; 1st Nov., 358; 359 (*f.n.*), 366; strength on evening 2nd Nov., 371; 376, 377, 379, 383, 386, 398, 408, 413; strength on 10th Nov., 414; 427, 437, 440, 441, 442; strength on 12th Nov., 449; 452, 456, 458; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

2nd—100 (*f.n.*), 102, 106, 108, 109, 120, 137, 146, 148, 157, 158, 159, 163, 164, 170, 173 (*f.n.*), 175, 178, 179 (and *f.n.*), 182 (*f.n.*); front taken over by French 17th Div. 23rd Oct., 188; 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 197, 198; counter-attack 24th Oct., 199; co-operates in French counter-attack, 199; 200, 203, 234, 236, 237 (*f.n.*), 238, 239, 242, 243, 244, 245, 249, 250, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 258, 262 (*f.n.*), 269, 271; situation night 29th Oct., 274; 277, 279, 280, 283, 284, 285, 294, 297 (*f.n.*), 299, 322, 323; catastrophe to staff, 323; 326, 327 (*f.n.*), 328, 330, 332; 31st Oct., 339; 340, 341, 343, 345, 347, 357, 358, 359; strength on evening 2nd Nov., 371; 373, 374, 376; reinforced 3rd Nov., 377; 380, 386, 387, 389, 397, 403, 408, 413; strength on 10th Nov., 414; 417, 426, 427, 437, 440, 442; 11th Nov., 445; 449, 453; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

3rd—72, 78, 81, 82, 83 (*f.n.*), 85, 86; attacked on 21st Oct., 87; retirement ordered, 88; 109, 119, 151, 152, 166, 205, 208, 209, 210, 211, 213, 215, 216; ordered to counter-attack Neuve Chapelle, 217; 218; casualties between 12th and 31st Oct., 222; 223, 340 (*f.n.*), 366, 397, 401, 408, 413, 414,

### Divisions (British) (*continued*)—

416, 421; 11th Nov., 425; attacked 13th Nov., 453; 454, 458; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

4th—71, 72, 94, 96, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 111, 112; occupies Armentières, 113; 114, 120, 136, 142, 143, 144, 149, 150, 153, 171, 225, 226, 227, 229, 230; casualties 15th-31st October, 231; 232, 275, 279, 283; resists attacks on 30th October, 292; 298, 304, 305, 309; casualties in October, 310 (*f.n.*); 344, 346, 349, 354, 355, 356; 2nd Nov., 362; 363, 365, 366, 379, 383 (*f.n.*), 384, 388, 402; casualties 7th Nov., 403; 404, 406, 409, 410 (*f.n.*), 414, 415, 416, 422, 459; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

5th—72, 78, 82, 85 (*f.n.*), 86, 90, 91, 109, 119, 207, 210, 211, 214, 217; casualties in October, 222, 354, 355, 365, 366, 383 (*f.n.*), 397; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

6th—71 (*f.n.*), 72, 96, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 111, 112, 113, 114, 119, 125 (*f.n.*), 136, 138, 141, 142; casualties 20th Oct., 142; 143, 149, 151, 217, 225, 226, 227, 229, 231; casualties 15th-31st Oct., 231; 415; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

7th—8; 21 (*f.n.*); 36, 42; embarks at Southampton, 46; landing of, 49; proceeds to Bruges, 50; 52, 54, 55, 64, 65, 66, 67, 72, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 115, 116, 120, 121, 122, 131, 132, 133, 134; position on night 19th Oct., 135; casualties 19th Oct., 135; 137, 138, 144, 145, 146, 148, 152 (*f.n.*), 153, 155, 156; at Battle of Langemarek, 154; 157, 162, 166, 168, 170, 175; attacks on 22nd Oct., 176; 177, 179, 182 (*f.n.*), 184, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194; at Polygon Wood, 195; 197, 198, 199; casualties 22nd to 24th Oct., 201; attacked 24th Oct., 201, 202, 226, 234, 236, 238 (*f.n.*), 240, 243, 244, 247;



Divisions (British) (*continued*)—

casualties 18th-26th Oct., 248; 249, 250, 252; placed under I. Corps, 254; 255, 256, 258, 262 (*f.n.*), 263, 264, 268, 269, 271, 272, 273; situation on night 29th Oct., 274; 277, 280, 283; 284; loss of Zandvoorde, 285; 287, 289, 293, 295, 296, 297, 298, 325; 31st Oct., 332; 333, 334, 335, 337, 338; casualties 31st Oct., 338; 343, 346; on 1st Nov., 356; 357, 359 (*f.n.*), 361; 2nd Nov., 366; strength on evening 2nd Nov., 371; 374; reinforced 3rd Nov., 377; 379, 380, 383; relieved on 5th Nov., 383; 384 (*f.n.*); résumé of fighting from 12th Oct., 384; casualties month ending 5th Nov., 385; 387, 391, 409, 459; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

8th—8, 254, 373, 406 (*f.n.*); infantry arrives in France, 422 (*f.n.*); concentration completed, 13th Nov., 449; 459; casualties between 14th Oct. and 30th Nov., 466

27th—406 (*f.n.*)

1st (London)—7

42nd (East Lancashire)—7

43rd (1st Wessex)—7 (*f.n.*)

44th (1st Home Counties)—7 (*f.n.*)

45th (2nd Wessex)—7 (*f.n.*)

Royal Naval, formation of, 41 (*f.n.*); Gen. Paris assumes command, 44; distribution on night 6th/7th Oct., 47; 52, 56; retirement ordered, 58; casualties in Antwerp expedition, 62 (*f.n.*); conduct of, 63; 64

Divisions (Indian)—

Lahore—8, 9, 89, 92, 120, 148, 168, 182, 191 (*f.n.*); arrives at Estaires, 206; placed under II. Corps, 207; 208, 214, 218 (*f.n.*), 232, 235, 258, 426

Meerut—8, 92, 120, 221, 363 (*f.n.*)

Engineers—

Field Companies—

5th—403, 437, 439, 441

9th—151

12th—101

17th—427

23rd—271, 288, 295, 326, 398, 438

Engineers (*continued*)—

Field Companies (*continued*)—

26th—179 (*f.n.*), 187 (*f.n.*), 271, 294, 296, 326, 337, 356 (*f.n.*), 398

38th—101

54th—65, 66, 287

55th—173 (*f.n.*)

56th—427

59th—427, 455

Fortress Company—

Dorsetshire, 3 (*f.n.*)

20th Coy. 3rd Sappers and Miners, 214, 215, 219

21st Coy. 3rd Sappers and Miners, 214, 215, 219

Infantry—

Brigades—

1st (Guards), 161, 163, 179, 180,

182, 243, 246, 247, 248, 249,

250, 254, 255, 263, 264 (*f.n.*),

266, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272,

273, 285, 298, 313, 320 (*f.n.*),

321, 323, 328, 331, 338, 339,

341, 347, 359, 371, 376, 389,

416, 425, 432, 441, 442, 444,

449, 451

2nd—158 (*f.n.*), 162, 164, 179,

182, 184, 249, 250, 254, 255,

271, 273, 274, 288, 294, 298,

313, 318, 333 (*f.n.*), 347, 359,

369, 371, 390 (*f.n.*), 396, 408,

427, 437

3rd—158, 159 (*f.n.*), 163, 179,

180, 182, 249, 250, 254, 255,

264, 266, 268, 269, 271, 272,

273, 285, 290, 296, 298, 299,

313, 314, 317, 318, 324, 325,

333, 335, 338, 347, 359, 367,

369, 371, 380, 383, 390, 396,

399, 400, 407 (*f.n.*), 410

4th (Guards)—146, 156, 158,

188, 189, 200, 203, 237, 243,

244, 249, 250, 253, 256, 271,

274, 299, 333 (*f.n.*), 347, 424

5th—146, 158, 160, 163, 179,

188, 189, 197, 198, 199, 200,

201, 203, 236, 237, 238, 243,

244, 250, 253, 255, 256, 269,

271, 284, 299, 321, 347, 370,

413, 436, 437, 440, 441, 443,

444, 458

6th—146, 158, 177, 179, 198,

200, 201, 203, 236, 237, 243,

244, 250, 253, 254, 256, 269,

271, 284, 299, 340, 347, 358,

433, 452, 458

7th—78, 85, 87, 207 (*f.n.*), 208,

211, 217, 221, 222, 397, 402



Infantry (*continued*)—Brigades (*continued*)—

- 8th—78, 81, 85, 87, 88, 208  
(and *f.n.*), 209, 222, 344, 383,  
415, 459
- 9th—78, 84, 85, 87, 90, 208 (and  
*f.n.*), 209, 211, 213, 214, 219,  
221, 222, 297 (*f.n.*), 344, 351,  
352, 397
- 10th—96, 97, 106, 107, 113,  
114, 135, 142, 149, 225 (*f.n.*),  
227
- 11th—101, 105, 106, 107, 114,  
142, 144, 149, 150, 151, 225  
(*f.n.*), 230, 293, 355, 365, 366,  
406
- 12th—94, 105, 107, 113, 114,  
115, 143, 149; at Le Gheer,  
150; casualties 21st Oct.,  
150; 151, 153, 225 (*f.n.*),  
227, 230, 305
- 13th—77, 78, 80, 82, 87, 207  
(*f.n.*), 208, 219, 220, 297  
(*f.n.*), 344, 384, 422 (*f.n.*),  
430, 459
- 14th—78, 80, 81, 87, 88, 207  
(*f.n.*), 208, 214, 217, 220, 221,  
344, 383, 415, 459 (*f.n.*)
- 15th—77, 78, 80, 81; retakes  
Givenchy, 84; 85, 87, 207  
(and *f.n.*), 221, 384, 397,  
415
- 16th—71 (*f.n.*); rejoins III.  
Corps, 102; 111, 112, 113,  
139, 141, 142, 225 (*f.n.*), 227,  
228
- 17th—101, 111, 112, 113, 141,  
151, 225 (*f.n.*), 227
- 18th—97, 101, 111, 112, 113,  
138, 141, 142, 225 (*f.n.*), 228,  
229
- 19th—71, 86, 88, 99, 102, 105,  
109, 120, 132, 137, 142, 148,  
151, 152, 166, 167, 207, 208,  
225, 226, 227, 229, 258, 403,  
415, 459
- 20th—107, 115, 132, 144, 153,  
155, 176, 189, 190 (*f.n.*), 195,  
199, 201, 202, 204, 238, 240,  
245 (and *f.n.*), 246, 247, 248,  
249, 250, 251, 255, 269, 270,  
272, 273, 274, 288, 298, 333  
(and *f.n.*), 334, 338, 346, 356,  
357, 358, 370 (*f.n.*), 386, 390,  
410
- 21st—116, 132, 135, 144, 155,  
156, 176, 177, 178, 189, 190  
(*f.n.*), 195 (*f.n.*), 196, 197,  
198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 238,  
246 (*f.n.*), 247, 248, 249, 250,

Infantry (*continued*)—Brigades (*continued*)—

- 255, 268, 272, 273, 280, 286,  
287, 289, 298, 313, 333, 334,  
338, 346, 357, 358, 368, 369,  
386, 390, 406, 410 (*f.n.*), 416,  
459
- 22nd—116, 132, 134 (*f.n.*), 135,  
145, 146, 155, 156, 159, 162,  
166, 175, 176, 177, 178, 189,  
190 (*f.n.*), 196, 197, 198, 200,  
201, 202, 238, 245, 247, 248,  
249, 250, 254, 255, 269, 272,  
273, 280, 286, 288, 298, 333,  
334, 335, 338, 339, 346, 358,  
377, 386, 390, 396, 399, 400,  
407 (*f.n.*), 410
- 23rd—422 (*f.n.*), 449, 459
- Royal Marine, composition of,  
28; 29, 30; strength of,  
41 (*f.n.*); arrives at Ant-  
werp, 41; 42, 44, 58, 59, 63
- 1st Naval, arrives at Antwerp,  
44; 45, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61,  
63
- 2nd Naval, arrives at Ant-  
werp, 44; 45, 58, 59, 63
- Brigades (Indian)—
- Bangalore—20; Bareilly—  
221; Dehra Dun—221, 223;  
Ferozepore—89 (*f.n.*), 182,  
207, 213, 232, 240, 250, 251;  
Garhwal—221; Jullundur—  
89, 207, 208, 209, 213, 216,  
220, 221, 225 (*f.n.*), 226;  
Secunderabad—8, 92; Sir-  
hind—89 (*f.n.*), 92, 120, 207,  
221
- Regiments—
- Foot Guards—
- Coldstream, 1st Bn., 161,  
162, 163, 181, 187, 249,  
263, 264, 265, 266, 267,  
269, 270, 273, 274, 298  
(*f.n.*), 315, 358, 361, 367,  
368, 386, 414, 433, 437,  
452
- , 2nd Bn., 146, 156, 158,  
271, 284, 339, 347, 377, 445
- , 3rd Bn., 146, 158, 159,  
271, 284, 339, 347
- Grenadier, 1st Bn., 49 (*f.n.*),  
189, 201, 203 (*f.n.*), 238,  
239, 240, 245, 246, 247,  
263, 267, 268, 269, 270,  
272, 274, 298 (*f.n.*), 333,  
335, 338, 358 (*f.n.*)
- Grenadier, 2nd Bn., 237,  
271, 272, 294, 298 (*f.n.*),  
333 (*f.n.*), 346, 356, 357,

Infantry (*continued*)—

Regiments (*continued*)—

Foot Guards (*continued*)—

394, 395, 396, 407, 414,  
427, 437 (*f.n.*), 440, 442,  
443, 444

Irish, 156, 159, 200, 237, 272,  
294, 298 (*f.n.*), 333 (*f.n.*),  
346, 356, 357, 394, 395,  
396, 407, 410, 414, 427,  
437 (*f.n.*), 440, 441, 442,  
443, 444, 456

Scots, 1st Bn., 181, 187, 249,  
264, 267 (*f.n.*), 270, 271,  
273, 313, 314, 316, 318  
(*f.n.*), 320, 321, 329, 330,  
339, 368, 407, 408, 416  
(*f.n.*), 426, 432, 434, 435,  
437, 440, 441, 443

—, 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*), 107,  
144, 155, 157, 176, 177,  
189, 196, 201 (*f.n.*), 203  
(*f.n.*), 221, 239, 240, 245,  
246, 248, 263, 267, 269,  
271, 272, 273, 274, 299,  
333, 334, 335, 338, 358  
(*f.n.*)

Infantry of the Line and Terri-  
torial—

Artists Rifles. *See* London  
Regiment

Bedfordshire, 1st Bn., 49  
(*f.n.*), 81, 207 (*f.n.*), 211,  
220, 221, 384 (and *f.n.*),  
401, 449 (*f.n.*), 455

—, 2nd Bn., 67, 178, 203  
(*f.n.*), 272, 273, 287, 289,  
319, 333, 334, 338

Berkshire, Royal (Princess  
Charlotte of Wales's), 1st  
Bn., 175 (*f.n.*), 179, 196  
(*f.n.*), 200, 203 (*f.n.*), 236,  
237, 244, 322, 323, 329,  
332, 339, 347, 358, 359,  
367, 368, 369, 394, 403

—, 2nd Bn., 371

Border, 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*),  
201, 239, 240, 245, 246,  
248, 263, 267, 268, 272,  
274, 333, 334, 335, 338,  
358 (*f.n.*), 370

—, 5th Bn., 378 (*f.n.*)

Buffs (East Kent Regiment),  
1st Bn., 111, 112, 141, 169,  
227

Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)  
1st Bn., 71, 152, 227 (*f.n.*)

Cheshire, 1st Bn., 84, 87, 89,  
90, 207 (*f.n.*), 214, 215,

Infantry (*continued*)—

Regiments (*continued*)—

Infantry of the Line and Terri-  
torial (*continued*)—

219, 220, 252, 384 (*f.n.*),  
401, 425, 449, 454, 455

Connaught Rangers, 1st Bn.,  
182, 232, 250

—, 2nd Bn., 199, 201, 203  
(*f.n.*), 256, 271, 339, 340,  
347, 372, 386, 403, 437, 439

Devonshire, 1st Bn., 81, 85,  
207 (*f.n.*), 210, 220, 221

—, 2nd Bn., 422 (*f.n.*)

Dorsetshire, 1st Bn., 80, 81,  
207 (*f.n.*), 214, 222, 231,  
252, 355, 366, 384

Duke of Cornwall's Light  
Infantry, 1st Bn., 87, 88,  
207 (*f.n.*), 214, 459 (*f.n.*)

Duke of Wellington's (West  
Riding), 2nd Bn., 207  
(*f.n.*), 384 (*f.n.*), 401, 408,  
426, 429, 430, 431, 434,  
439, 442, 454

Durham Light Infantry, 2nd  
Bn., 111, 113, 139, 140,  
228, 229

Essex, 1st Bn., 232

—, 2nd Bn., 114, 149,  
150, 151

Fusiliers—

Dublin, Royal, 2nd Bn., 114

Inniskilling, Royal, 2nd  
Bn., 115, 150, 230, 305,  
307, 309 (and *f.n.*), 354,  
355, 366, 402

Irish, Royal (Princess Vic-  
toria's), 1st Bn., 114,  
142, 402

Lancashire, 2nd Bn., 114,  
150, 229, 230, 366, 402, 410

Munster, Royal, 2nd Bn.,  
175, 396, 407 (*f.n.*), 416  
(*f.n.*), 424, 425 (*f.n.*),  
442, 443, 456

Northumberland, 1st Bn.,  
208 (*f.n.*), 212, 213, 214,  
215, 216, 222, 297 (*f.n.*),  
351, 384 (*f.n.*), 401, 408,  
426, 430, 455

Royal (City of London),  
1st Bn., 113

Royal (City of London),  
4th Bn., 208 (*f.n.*), 209,  
211, 212, 213, 215, 216,  
217, 384 (*f.n.*), 407, 408,  
420, 426, 429, 430

Scots, Royal, 1st Bn., 85,  
208 (*f.n.*), 223, 319, 325,

# 546 INDEX TO ARMS, FORMATIONS AND UNITS

## Infantry (*continued*)—

### Regiments (*continued*)—

#### Infantry of the Line and Territorial (*continued*)—

##### Fusiliers (*continued*)—

330, 334, 383, 426, 429,  
430, 439

—, 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*),  
144, 155, 178, 189, 195,  
196, 197, 201, 203 (*f.n.*),  
238, 273, 280, 285, 287,  
289, 290, 313, 333, 339,  
346

Welch, Royal, 1st Bn., 49  
(*f.n.*), 184, 195, 196, 201,  
240, 247, 273, 280, 285,  
287, 288, 289, 298 (*f.n.*),  
339, 399 (*f.n.*)

—, 2nd Bn., 152

Gloucestershire, 1st Bn., 159  
(*f.n.*), 160, 161, 179 (*f.n.*),  
186, 187 (*f.n.*), 250, 264,  
266, 267 (*f.n.*), 268, 272,  
273, 299, 313, 315, 317,  
318, 330, 359, 369 (*f.n.*),  
377, 380, 396, 400, 407  
(*f.n.*), 427, 437 (*f.n.*), 440,  
441, 442

Green Howards, 2nd Bn., 49  
(*f.n.*), 155, 178, 189, 201,  
238, 272, 273, 280, 285,  
287, 289, 290, 333, 334

Hampshire, 1st Bn., 105,  
149, 230, 366, 402

Hertfordshire (Territorial),  
1st Bn., 446, 452, 456

##### Highlanders—

Argyll and Sutherland  
(Princess Louise's), 2nd  
Bn., 151, 152, 229, 403,  
410

Cameron, Queen's Own,  
1st Bn., 161, 162, 163,  
180, 181, 185, 186, 249,  
264 (*f.n.*), 270, 271, 313,  
321, 330, 432, 433, 434,  
435, 436, 439, 441, 443,  
456

—, 2nd Bn., 426

Gordon, 1st Bn., 208 (*f.n.*),  
209, 383, 384 (*f.n.*), 425,  
454

—, 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*),  
144, 189 (*f.n.*), 239, 246,  
263, 268 (*f.n.*), 272, 288,  
289, 298 (*f.n.*), 333 (*f.n.*),  
335, 336, 337, 338, 346,  
357, 358 (*f.n.*), 370 (*f.n.*)

Royal (Black Watch), 1st  
Bn., 181, 184, 247, 248,

## Infantry (*continued*)—

### Regiments (*continued*)—

#### Infantry of the Line and Territorial (*continued*)—

##### Highlanders (*continued*)—

249, 263, 264 (*f.n.*), 265,  
266, 269, 270, 274, 313,  
321, 330, 358, 368, 408,  
416 (*f.n.*), 426, 432, 433,  
434, 436, 438, 439, 440,  
443, 449

—, 5th Bn., 378 (*f.n.*)

Scaforth (Ross-shire Buffs,  
The Duke of Albany's),  
2nd Bn., 114, 142

Highland Light Infantry,  
2nd Bn., 158, 179, 198,  
199, 203 (*f.n.*), 256, 271,  
339, 347, 359, 371, 380,  
386, 403, 437, 440, 443, 452

Honourable Artillery Com-  
pany, 378 (*f.n.*), 386, 390,  
415

Irish, Royal, 2nd Bn., 85,  
86, 138, 208 (*f.n.*), 252

Irish Rifles, Royal, 2nd Bn.,  
87, 207 (*f.n.*), 209, 211, 212,  
213, 215, 384 (*f.n.*), 425,  
449

Kent, East. *See* Buffs

Kent, West. *See* Queen's  
Own Royal West Kent

King's (Liverpool), 1st Bn.,  
179, 196 (*f.n.*), 200, 203  
(*f.n.*), 236, 244, 272, 322,  
323, 339, 347, 377, 425,  
432, 433, 435, 436, 437,  
440, 442, 445

—, 10th Bn., 378 (*f.n.*)

King's Own Royal Regiment  
(Lancaster), 1st Bn., 114,  
150, 403

King's Own Scottish Bor-  
derers, 1st Bn., 382

—, 2nd Bn., 82, 207 (*f.n.*),  
222, 297 (*f.n.*), 307, 308,  
309, 346, 354, 425

King's Own Yorkshire Light  
Infantry, 2nd Bn., 207  
(*f.n.*), 211, 219, 220, 221,  
222, 297 (*f.n.*), 307, 308,  
309, 346, 354, 382, 422  
(*f.n.*), 454, 455

King's Royal Rifle Corps, 1st  
Bn., 200 (*f.n.*), 244, 253,  
254, 284, 299, 339, 340,  
341, 347, 358, 362, 366

—, 2nd Bn., 181, 185, 186,  
271, 294, 313, 314, 315,  
316, 317, 318, 330, 334,



Infantry (*continued*)—  
 Regiments (*continued*)—  
 Infantry of the Line and Territorial (*continued*)—  
     339, 347, 359, 368, 369  
     (*f.n.*), 396, 407, 416 (*f.n.*),  
     424, 451  
 King's Shropshire Light In-  
 fantry, 1st Bn., 227  
 Lancashire, East, 1st Bn.,  
     142, 149, 150, 402, 410  
 Lancashire, North. *See*  
     Loyal Regiment  
 Lancashire, South. *See*  
     Prince of Wales's Volun-  
     teers  
 Leicestershire, 1st Bn., 227,  
     228  
 Leinster. *See* Prince of  
     Wales's Leinster Regiment  
 Lincolnshire, 1st Bn., 85,  
     208 (*f.n.*), 209, 211, 213,  
     215, 216, 217, 222, 297  
     (*f.n.*), 351, 352, 384 (*f.n.*),  
     408, 426, 429, 430, 455  
     —, 2nd Bn., 9  
 London Regiment, 14th Bn.  
     (London Scottish), 276,  
     277 (*f.n.*), 295, 298, 307,  
     308, 310 (and *f.n.*), 311, 346,  
     350 (and *f.n.*), 352, 354, 373,  
     378 (*f.n.*), 384 (*f.n.*), 407,  
     414, 424, 427, 456  
     —, 16th Bn. (Queen's West-  
     minster Rifles), 378 (*f.n.*)  
     —, 28th Bn. (Artists Rifles)  
     378 (*f.n.*), 386, 390  
 London Scottish. *See* Lon-  
     don Regiment  
 Loyal Regiment (North  
     Lancashire), 1st Bn., 182,  
     185, 186, 271, 294, 299, 313,  
     314, 316 (*f.n.*), 317, 318,  
     319, 325, 330, 334, 339,  
     347, 359, 369 (*f.n.*), 386,  
     407, 408, 425 (*f.n.*), 427,  
     437 (*f.n.*), 442  
 Manchester, 1st Bn., 220  
     —, 2nd Bn., 207 (*f.n.*), 211,  
     221  
 Middlesex (Duke of Cam-  
     bridge's Own), 1st Bn.,  
     151, 152, 229  
 Middlesex (Duke of Cam-  
     bridge's Own), 4th Bn.,  
     86, 208 (*f.n.*), 209, 223  
     —, 7th Bn., 3 (*f.n.*), 7  
     —, 8th Bn., 3 (*f.n.*), 7  
 Norfolk, 1st Bn., 77, 84, 207  
     (*f.n.*), 384

Infantry (*continued*)—  
 Regiments (*continued*)—  
 Infantry of the Line and Territorial (*continued*)—  
 Northamptonshire, 1st Bn.,  
     181, 184, 185, 288, 289,  
     294, 298 (*f.n.*), 333 (*f.n.*),  
     335, 336, 337, 338, 346,  
     357, 370, 377, 408, 425  
     (*f.n.*), 427, 436 (*f.n.*), 437  
     (*f.n.*), 440, 441, 442  
 Oxfordshire and Bucking-  
     hamshire Light Infantry,  
     2nd Bn., 158, 179, 188,  
     199, 201, 272, 294, 295,  
     298 (*f.n.*), 299 (*f.n.*), 333  
     (*f.n.*), 336, 337, 338, 346,  
     357, 395, 396, 407, 414,  
     427, 437 (*f.n.*), 440, 444,  
     456  
 Prince of Wales's Leinster  
     (Royal Canadians), 2nd  
     Bn., 111, 113, 141, 252  
 Prince of Wales's Volunteers  
     (South Lancashire), 1st  
     Bn., 425  
     —, 2nd Bn., 87, 88, 207  
     (*f.n.*), 211, 213, 214, 215,  
     220, 384 (*f.n.*), 454  
 Queen's Own Royal West  
     Kent, 1st Bn., 80 (*f.n.*), 88,  
     207 (*f.n.*), 209, 211, 214,  
     215, 219, 220, 360, 384  
     (*f.n.*), 422 (*f.n.*)  
 Queen's Royal Regiment  
     (West Surrey), 1st Bn.,  
     159 (*f.n.*), 160, 161, 163,  
     182, 185, 186, 187, 269,  
     272, 294, 313, 314, 315,  
     316, 317, 318, 319, 320,  
     321, 330, 334, 339, 347,  
     358, 369 (*f.n.*), 396, 407  
     (*f.n.*), 427, 437 (*f.n.*)  
     —, 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*), 134  
     (*f.n.*), 156, 201, 238, 269,  
     271, 272, 273, 285, 333,  
     339, 399  
 Queen's Westminster Rifles.  
     *See* London Regiment  
 Rifle Brigade (Prince Con-  
     sort's Own), 1st Bn., 149,  
     402, 403, 406  
     —, 3rd Bn., 111, 151  
 Scots, Royal (The Royal  
     Regiment), 2nd Bn., 208  
     (*f.n.*), 209, 217, 219, 220  
 Sherwood Foresters (Notting-  
     hamshire and Derbyshire),  
     2nd Bn., 139, 140, 141, 169,  
     252



# 548 INDEX TO ARMS, FORMATIONS AND UNITS

Infantry (*continued*)—  
   Regiments (*continued*)—  
     Infantry of the Line and Territorial (*continued*)—  
       Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's), 1st Bn., 105, 149, 150, 230, 366  
       Staffordshire, North (Prince of Wales's), 1st Bn., 217  
       Staffordshire, South, 1st Bn., 49 (*f.n.*), 178, 201, 240, 245, 246, 248, 274, 288, 289, 333, 399, 400  
       —, 2nd Bn., 182, 185, 200, 244, 253, 254, 284, 299, 339, 340, 347, 359, 372, 452  
       Suffolk, 2nd Bn., 208 (*f.n.*)  
       Surrey, East, 1st Bn., 80, 88, 207 (*f.n.*), 219  
       —, 6th Bn., 3 (*f.n.*)  
       Surrey, West. *See* Queen's Royal Regiment  
       Sussex, Royal, 2nd Bn., 162 (*f.n.*), 288, 289, 294, 298 (*f.n.*), 333 (*f.n.*), 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 346, 357, 370, 395, 396, 399, 407, 410, 427, 429, 430, 437 (*f.n.*), 440, 441, 442  
       Wales, South, Borderers, 1st Bn., 159 (*f.n.*), 160, 163, 254, 264, 269, 313, 314, 315, 316, 318 (*f.n.*), 320, 321, 323, 328, 329, 330, 331, 339, 359, 369 (*f.n.*), 386, 407 (*f.n.*), 410, 416 (*f.n.*), 424  
       —, 2nd Bn., 10 (*f.n.*)  
       Warwickshire, Royal, 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*), 156, 190, 197, 199, 201, 203 (*f.n.*), 240, 247, 288, 289, 293, 333, 334, 339, 399  
       Welsh, 2nd Bn., 160, 187, 254, 268, 269, 313, 315, 316, 318, 320, 330, 339, 359, 369 (*f.n.*), 396, 407 (*f.n.*), 416 (*f.n.*), 424  
       —, 6th Bn., 378 (*f.n.*)  
       Wiltshire (Duke of Edinburgh's), 1st Bn., 87, 207 (*f.n.*), 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 220, 384 (*f.n.*), 425, 428, 430  
       Wiltshire (Duke of Edinburgh's), 2nd Bn., 49 (*f.n.*), 144, 178, 189, 196, 197

Infantry (*continued*)—  
   Regiments (*continued*)—  
     Infantry of the Line and Territorial (*continued*)  
       (*f.n.*), 201, 239, 252, 273, 274, 298 (*f.n.*), 299, 333, 339, 346  
       Worcestershire, 2nd Bn., 158, 179, 188, 198, 199, 203 (*f.n.*), 272, 318 (*f.n.*), 321, 322, 323, 325, 327, 328, 329, 331, 339, 340, 341, 347, 357, 370  
       —, 3rd Bn., 87, 88, 207 (*f.n.*), 220, 222, 231, 366, 384, 402, 403  
       York and Lancaster, 2nd Bn. 112, 227  
       Yorkshire. *See* Green Howards  
       Yorkshire, East, 1st Bn., 113, 139, 140, 141, 142, 228, 229  
       Yorkshire, West (Prince of Wales's Own), 1st Bn., 111, 139, 140  
       —, 2nd Bn., 422 (*f.n.*)  
  
 Royal Marine Light Infantry—  
   Portsmouth Battalion, 58, 59, 61  
   Drake Battalion, 58, 59, 60  
   Hawke Battalion, 60  
 Regiments (Overseas Dominions)—  
   Canadian, Royal, 9  
   Gold Coast Regt., 22  
   King's African Rifles, 20  
   Newfoundland Regt., 9 (*f.n.*)  
 Regiments (Indian)—  
   9th Bhopal, 213, 214, 215, 218, 232  
   15th Sikhs, 209  
   29th Punjabis, 20  
   34th Sikh Pioneers, 208, 221  
   36th Sikhs, 10 (*f.n.*)  
   47th Sikhs, 213, 215, 218, 219  
   57th Wilde's Rifles, 182, 232, 250, 279, 292 (*f.n.*), 293 (*f.n.*), 304, 305, 306, 307, 310 (*f.n.*), 346  
   58th Vaughan's Rifles, 221  
   59th Scinde Rifles, 221  
   129th Baluchis, 232, 250, 279, 292, 310 (*f.n.*), 346  
   2/2nd Gurkha Rifles, 223  
   2/8th Gurkha Rifles, 221  
   Imperial Service Infantry, 20

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